

By Iván Zoltán Dénes



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Conservative Ideology in the Making

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Conservative Ideology in the Making

Iván Zoltán Dénes

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“For the people, truly I desire their liberty and freedom as much as anybody whomsoever. But I must tell you their liberty and freedom consists in having the government ... those laws by which their life and their goods may be most their own. It is not for having share in government. That is nothing pertaining to them.”

*Charles Stuart, January 30, 1649,
quoted in Williamson (1957), 143*

“It is indeed the aristocracy whose influence I wish to preserve in the legislation, excluding all whom wise laws have excluded so far as they are not yet competent. ... Indeed, I do wish to keep the masses under guardianship, and, honestly speaking, to bridle them; but also to promote their material well-being by righteous government; to foster their mental improvement, and not to let them waste their time needed for earning a living by taking part in something they do not know, do not want, and are incapable of, namely, in co-governing.”

*Albert Sztáray, January 8, 1842 in Albert Sztáray,
“Nagymihályi levelek” [Letters from Nagymihály]*

Table of Contents

Foreword	ix
Introduction	1
Modernity and Identity	1
Liberalisms and Conservatisms	3
Images of the Enemy	6
Conservatism	11
Its Definition and Types	11
Hungarian Conservatives: Context and Dilemmas	15
The Liberal Challenge: Nation-Building through Reforms	25
The Conservative Answer: Law, Order, and Stability	31
<i>What to Preserve, What to Give Up, and What to Modernize?</i> (1839–1842)	31
The Figure of the Founding Father	31
The Overture to Cautious Progress: The <i>Memorandum</i>	35
The First Liberal–Conservative Press Debate	41
Order-Based Modernity	54
<i>Separation vs. Unification (1842–1843)</i>	61
Conservative Reform	61
The Magyar Nation and the Non-Magyar Nationalities	66
Us and Them: Aristocracy vs. Democracy	74
<i>Law and Order: Which Kind? (1843–1844)</i>	79
What is to be Done with the Counties?	79
Conservative Arguments against the Juries	83
The Dietal Weight of the Cities	85
Failure of the Diet: Their Interpretations	88
<i>Journalists' Offensive: Issues and Arguments (1845–1847)</i>	93
Western Models and Hungarian Conditions	95
Constitutionalism	105

Toleration: Its Guarantees	112
Aristocracy, Nation, and Empire	121
Two Liberal Interpretations	134
<i>Party Programs (1846–1847)</i>	137
The Program of the Conservatives	137
The Opposition Program	148
The Differences	156
<i>Conservative Politics in Defense (1847–1848)</i>	160
The Immediate Precedent	160
Conservative Positions and Arguments	164
The Defeat of the Conservatives	172
Myth in the Making	179
The Conservatives in 1848/49	179
In Opposition	181
“Outcasts” of the Ausgleich	185
The Process of Mythmaking	187
Epilogue	189
Symbolic Link between Three Types of Conservatives (1927)	189
Conservative Master Narrative (1920, 1933)	191
Metamorphoses Narrationis (1942, 1947)	194
The Constant Core (1913–1955)	198
The Ethnicist Re-Reading of the Master Narrative (1939)	200
Competing Visions of National History	202
Primary Sources and Literature	207
Index	253

Foreword

The fifty years or so preceding the watershed of 1848–49 witnessed the emergence of liberal nationalism in Hungary, along with a transmutation of conservatism which appeared then as a party and an ideological system in the political arena. The specific features of the conservatism, combining the protection of the status quo with some reform measures, its strategic vision, conceptual system, argumentation, assessment criteria, and values require an in depth exploration and analysis. There were and are historians and political journalists who claim that the goals and programs of the liberals and conservatives only differed in tone and timing, and not in content or character. An objective answer is now overdue by more than a century and a half to the question of whether the purpose of the Hungarian conservative response to the liberal challenge was to defend the equilibrium of social classes and nationalities at European, imperial, and national levels, or to safeguard and modernize the system of privileges by birth.

Our sources of information for the political role and value system of the conservatives in the 1840s are their political journalism, the positions they took in the parliamentary debates, and their political and intellectual backgrounds, while the interpretation of the acquired information requires international comparison.

Most of my primary research was accomplished between 1977 and 1984. Based on this material, I wrote two articles in the early 1980s and 1990s, which were published in *The Historical Journal*.¹ In addition, I gained a great deal from the comments of the anonymous reviewers of both essays, and am grateful to the editors, Christopher Andrew and Jonathan Steinberg for their patience. I wrote the first version of this monograph in 1985 and the second in 2008.² Upon Isaiah Berlin's

¹ Dénes (1983, 1993).

² Dénes (1989, 2008).

(b. Riga, 1909, d. Oxford, 1997) encouragement, I initiated international research to explore the nature and contexts of liberal nationalisms so as to provide case studies of a contextual framework of future comparisons. The outcome of that work, *Liberty and the Search for Identity: Liberal Nationalisms and the Legacy of Empires*, lasting for nearly two decades, is not yet a comparative volume but the opening and clearing of the road to comparison.³

Upon receiving scholarships from the British Academy in 1981 and 1990, I had the opportunity to talk with several colleagues in the United Kingdom. In 1990–91, as a Fulbright scholar, and in 1993–94, as an IREX fellow, I accumulated further knowledge in the USA. I was particularly inspired by Isaiah Berlin (All Souls College, Oxford, Athenaeum Club, London), Stanley Hoffmann (Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies at Harvard University), John Graville Agard Pocock (Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD), John Rawls (Harvard University, Cambridge, MA; b. Baltimore, MD, 1921, d. 2002), James J. Sheehan (Stanford University, Stanford, CA), Quentin Skinner (Christ's College, University of Cambridge), Paul Smith (King's College, University of London), and Christopher Smout (St. Salvator's College, University of St. Andrews). The post-graduate seminar for historians at Johns Hopkins University during the fall and winter of 1993 was a life changing experience for me. So much so, that three years later I initiated the foundation in Budapest of the István Bibó Intellectual Workshop (www.bibomuhely.hu) based on its model, which has been my reference point and intellectual milieu ever since.

For all their helpful comments when I was working on the subject in the 1970s and 1980s, I remain indebted to my university tutor, György Szabad (Budapest), and János Varga (b. Sótóny, 1927, d. Budapest, 2008). The writings of István Bibó (Budapest, 1911–1979), Miklós Szabó (Budapest, 1935–2000), and János Kis (Budapest–New York) have been seminal. The encouragement and remarks of András Gergely (Budapest) and Károly Kecskeméti (Antony, France) played salient roles in the awakening process of the 2008 text.

In the first quarter of 2009, I thoroughly revised and supplemented the text of the 2008 monograph for the English version. I was greatly assisted in preparing it by the far-sighted comments of Károly Kecskeméti and Balázs Trencsényi (Central European University, Budapest), David Robert Evans's linguistic corrections, the patient and attentive translation

³ Dénes (2006).

by Judit Pokoly, the careful language revision by Thomas Szerecz and Breanne Herrera, the conscientious editing work of Linda Kunos and Krisztina Kós, and the cautious and diligent technical organization of the entire process by Erzsébet Nagy. I am deeply indebted to all of them for the energy, care, and time they spared.

Budapest, August 2009

Iván Zoltán Dénes

Introduction

Modernity and Identity

Is there a vicious circle of binary forms of political discourses in Central and Eastern Europe—modernity vs. tradition, progress vs. nation, freedom vs. community, self-realization vs. belonging to a community, “Western cosmopolitan civilization” vs. “national identity,” adoption of the European model vs. national self-centeredness? Defining and comparing the roots, history, and variants of these oppositions in different geographical regions of Europe is a task and can be a way forward, so long as caution is taken against the usual schematic models of the *original backwardness*, the different romantic nationalistic *Sonderwegs* and their various national mythologies of *uniqueness*. These false alternatives were parts of the heritage of enlightened absolutism bequeathed to its “intelligentsia.” As an outcome of autocratic and totalitarian regimes, these dichotomies were revived. Opposed though similarly unproductive, they mark attempts to create identity in each and all of the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries.

Are the alternatives like cosmopolitanism and collective identity, catching up and expansion, emulation and isolation, and inorganic and organic development really unavoidable? Underlying all this, that is, the postulates of the West and the East (usually in the singular), cosmopolitan civilization and national specificities, and the progress of Europe and the mission of the nation, was the intellectual and emotional legacy of diverse responses to the modernizing challenges. These included economic revolution, the enlightened absolutisms, the American and French political revolutions, and Napoleonic wars, which permeated the absolutist attempts of the modernizing systems on the semi-peripheries of Europe at that time. These postulates especially imbued the images of self and enemy onto the intelligentsia who actually created their self-identity during these modernizing attempts. The schemes and political idioms of moder-

nity vs. tradition and progress vs. nation were the opposite extremes along a range of attitudes toward modernization and the search for collective identity from Sweden to Russia, Poland to Greece, and from Ireland through Italy to Spain, Portugal, and Latin America. Several thinkers in the different variants of westernization vs. self-isolation (*zapadnik*–Slavophile, cosmopolitan–patriot, Enlightened–Sarmatian) chose civilization and progress over nation, motherland, and tradition. By contrast, the latter patriotic adherents rejected the innovations urged for by the advocates of progress because they feared that the civilizing reforms would lead to the annihilation of the “ancient constitution,” national traditions, and to foreign domination. Their images of the self and the enemy were determined by the dichotomies of constitutionality vs. absolutism, progress vs. backwardness, civilization vs. barbarism, West vs. East, virtue vs. corruption, patriotism vs. imperial loyalty, and autonomous judgement vs. interest dictated prejudice.

However, not all those who chose constitutionality over absolutism were committed to progress, patriotism, or autonomous judgement. By the same token, not all who wished to promote progress were devout advocates of constitutionality, patriotism, or independent opinion in all regards. The concept of progress was often paired with imperial loyalty and an understanding for a type of absolutism which was embraced by several followers of enlightened absolutisms, the French revolution, and Napoleon. Everywhere there were patriots who were quick to realize that in the teeth of the absolutist threat the defense of constitutionality demanded its transformation and the extension of the personal and political rights to the unprivileged. By contrast, there were advocates of progress who concluded that backwardness could only be eliminated by a strong—even absolutist—state. The exponents of constitutionality expressed themselves in terms of the nation, those of progress in terms of good government, and the universalism of natural law was not alien to them, either. They were first of all the forerunners of European liberal nationalisms representing different conceptions, dilemmas, and traditions.¹ The harmonious unity of progress, freedom, and nation lasted until its advocates rose to power and realized that their respective nations were divided by social class, nationality, culture, and religion, and that the extension of political rights did not eliminate these subdivisions. Apparently it was the attitude toward the different nationalities within the state and its relation to the program of the

¹ Walicki (1975, 1982), Jedlicki (1999), Janowski (2004), Dénes (2006), and Trencsényi and Kopeček (2006–2007.).

nation-state—a most delicate question—that determined their views on confederative solutions. Liberal nationalisms had several antagonists, first of all the conservatives who spoke up for order, tradition, and authority.²

Liberalisms and Conservatisms

The efforts of liberal, conservative, national, radical, democratic, and, later, socialist movements outline a web of complex threads—often interpenetrating, rival, or hostile—in various parts of Europe, including Hungary. The diverse liberalisms and nationalisms are arranged on a scale from a harmonious, mutually interdependent relationship to utter hostility (and self-definition in opposition to the other pole), the degree ranging from national to anti-national liberalisms and from liberal to anti-liberal nationalisms.³ A similarly complex and differentiated picture is outlined by the various liberalisms in relation to democratic movements and rudimentary parties, ranging from anti-democratic to democratic liberalisms, from anti-liberal to liberal democracies and their opponents, the populist democracies.⁴ The relation between various liberal and conservative groups, organizations, and parties ranges from the antagonism of the followers and opponents of constitutionality to the programs of modernization—varying in phrasing, content, and aim from general opposition to totalitarian systems to the mutual acceptance of liberal democracy and neo-liberal economic policy and the different evaluation of the collective rights of the minorities.⁵

The relationship between conservatisms and nationalisms is also complex, from opposition through interpenetration to new opposition.⁶ The attitude toward the emerging socialist movements, just as the attitude of the various socialist trends to the rest of the ideological and political currents, outlines a highly intricate picture from utter rejection to alliance and vice versa.⁷

² Walicki (1975, 1982), Jedlicki (1999), Janowski (2004), Dénes (2006), Trencsényi and Kopeček (2006–2007), Mishkova (2009), and Trencsényi (2010).

³ Bibó (1976), esp. 35–52, Tamir (1993), Kis (1997) 129–184, Kymlicka (2000), Freedén (2005), Kymlicka and Banting (2006), Dénes (2006), Trencsényi and Kopeček (2006–2007), Mishkova (2009), and Trencsényi (2010).

⁴ Kis (1999, 2003, 2008).

⁵ Ruggiero (1959), Kecskeméti (1989), Miklós Szabó (1989, 2003), Kis (1997), and Dénes (2006). A thorough modern synthesis of the theme is missing.

⁶ Mannheim (1953), Epstein (1966), and Kaltenbrunner (1972).

⁷ Miklós Szabó (1989, 1993, 2003). A serious comprehensive synthesis of the different forms of conservatism is lacking.

Several philosophers have removed the time factor from the political opposition of liberals and conservatives and projected it back into antiquity or the Middle Ages. Some have tied it to the dynastic and religious opposition of the Whigs and Tories.⁸ Some historians claim that in several European countries this antagonism can be traced to the French revolution, and to the constitutional vs. absolutist opposition of the parties of the Spanish Cortez in 1812 and the following years.⁹ From the 1870s and 1880s to the interwar period, the liberal and conservative parties were primarily differentiated by their efforts to minimize rather than increase the role of the state, by their support of the free market vs. state protectionism, parliamentarianism vs. corporatism, free vs. command economy, or deconstruction vs. preservation of privileges. After World War II, especially after the offensive of the human rights movements and the Chicago School/Thatcher/Reagan neoliberal turn, the distance between the liberals and conservatives diminished. Also, the liberal parties became small parties, with several elements of their role being adopted and reinterpreted by the radical and socialist parties.

In Hungary, the different liberal political organizations were participants in five changes of political systems (1848, 1867, 1918, 1945, 1989/90), initiating and providing platforms for three of them (1848, 1918, 1989/90), and shaping and determining one (1867–1918). They also formed the opposition to six absolutist, authoritarian, totalitarian, and oligarchic systems (1832–1848, 1849–1867, 1919, 1919–1944, 1947–1949, 1977/81–1989). Different conservative groups were in the background or in opposition from 1848 to 1918, while in the period between the two world wars, they constituted the overwhelming majority of ruling parties. During the one-party system, from 1949 to 1989, the liberals and conservatives—like all other political groups—were illegal, a status from which they could later emerge upon the change of the political system. However, the actors, groupings, and value systems were now different from those of yore. In the second half of the 1840s the conservatives first gathered into a party in opposition to the liberals, but as political actors their antagonism was rooted in the 1790s and could be traced from the 1820s.¹⁰ The pro-government, anti-opposition Conservative Party was

⁸ Cf. Butterfield (1931) and Smith (1980).

⁹ *Anti-Jacobin Review* 50 (June 1816): 553; Miller (1830) 276. Cf. Epstein (1963), 3–22, Kaltenbrunner (1972), 139–329, Crow (1985), 245–57, and Cortázar, Vesga, and González (1994).

¹⁰ Kecskeméti (1989), Varga (1982a, 1993), and Bérenger and Kecskeméti (2005).

founded in 1846—almost at the same time as Robert Peel’s Anti-Corn Law League—while the Opposition Party rallying the Hungarian liberals emerged officially in 1847. The precedent to the Conservative Party was the court party (*Staatspartei*) while that of the liberals—at least formally—was the traditional party of grievances (*Landespartei*).¹¹

The emergence of the Opposition Party took a while, since underlying the appearance of continuity with the gravaminalist opposition there was a new set of wholly liberal notions. The majority of the nobility from the 1790s to the political emergence of the liberals was characterized by a conservatism aimed at preserving the status quo. The opposition united by grievances pursued the policy of the preservation of constitutional privileges, while the court party was in unconditional support of the government in the name of loyalty to the sovereign. In the late 1830s and early 1840s an ambitious Hungarian conservative government official, Count Aurél Dessewffy, initiated the organization of a conservative program, group, party, and newspaper. In the 1840s, the supreme Hungarian government body and the conservatives supporting it launched an offensive under the leadership of two Hungarian conservative government politicians, Count György Apponyi and Baron Samu Jósika, to bring about a pro-government majority in the lower house and squeeze out the liberals from the parliament and county assemblies. To this end the Conservative Party was founded on November 12, 1846 with the participation of some conservative politicians—Count Emil Dessewffy, Sándor Lipthay, and Count Antal Szécsen—and senior officials of the government agencies and counties in support of the conservative government politicians.

The political and press offensive of the conservatives unfurling in several waves between 1843 and 1847 was far from unsuccessful. In the spring of 1848, however, they were forced to leave the political arena, at which point the majority of them returned on the side of the Habsburg army during the military conflict. In the first decade of neo-absolutism they were pushed into the background, but they played an important role in preparing the *Ausgleich* (Compromise). More important than their actual role was their legend that emerged in the 1870s, gaining strength in the early twentieth century, reviving in the 1920s, and is even very present today. In 1848 the liberals formed a government and the parliamentary parties of 1848–49. Between 1849 and 1860 they were ousted from local and national political life, into which they returned in 1860–61 provision-

¹¹ Cf. Bérenger and Kecskeméti (2005).

ally, and from 1865 gradually, with the restoration of pluralistic aristocratic political forms.

The party led by Ferenc Deák (the 1861 *Felirati Párt*—lit. “the party proposing to submit an *address* to the sovereign”) that concluded the *Ausgleich* with the court, as well as the opposition led by Kálmán Tisza between 1868 and 1875 (called in 1861 *Határozati Párt*, led by László Teleki, lit. “a party in favor of sending a parliamentary resolution to the sovereign”) defined themselves as national liberal. The Liberal Party was created with the fusion of the above two parties in 1875, and its successor, the governing National Labor Party of the 1910s led by István Tisza, also defined itself as a national liberal party. Even the leftist opposition of the governing Liberal Party, that is, the Independence Party and the Party of 1848, identified themselves as national liberal parties until the 1890s and afterwards.

The 1875 parliamentary faction of Baron Pál Sennyey, the former conservative politician of the Reform era, was a conservative initiative urging for the centralization of the public administration. The Moderate Opposition, the Rightist Opposition, and later National Party led by Count Albert Apponyi, were conservative formations.¹² The neo-conservative parties—the Anti-Semitic Party, the Conservative Catholic, later Catholic People’s Party, the Association of Hungarian Landowners, and the Christian Socialist Party—were founded in the 1880s in terms of anti-liberalism, state social policy, interest protection, and restricted economic forms.¹³ Liberal democratic party initiatives were the Budapest middle-class party of Vilmos Vázsonyi at the outset of the twentieth century, Oszkár Jászi’s Civic Radical Party, in some interpretations the liberal party of Károly Rassay and Rezső Rupert in the interwar period, the circle of the periodical *Századunk* (Our century), the group of legitimists in the 1930s and 1940s, and the Cobden League.¹⁴ After 1945, the Democratic Citizens’ and the Radical Citizens’ Parties were liberal parties; so was the democratic, human rights opposition to the state party from the 1970s, the Alliance of Free Democrats founded in 1988, and Fidesz (Alliance of Young Democrats) during the change of regime. The great government parties of the 1920s and 1930s were conservative parties. The politics and political language of the late Kádár era state party, which had shifted from a totalitarian towards an oligarchic (and ideologically increasingly empty, pragmatic)

¹² Mérei (1971), 13–321.

¹³ Miklós Szabó (2003).

¹⁴ Miklós Szabó (2001).

character, also displayed conservative specificities aimed at preserving the status quo. This was, obviously, not declared openly since it did not exercise its power by divine grace (nor, for that matter, by popular sovereignty) and it was wholly incompatible with its official ideology. Since the political turn of 1989/90 the Hungarian Democratic Forum, and for the past sixteen years the Fidesz Hungarian Civic Party (later Hungarian Civic Union and its ally the Christian Democratic People's Party), have identified themselves as conservative.

Images of the Enemy

During the emergence and domination of the state party, equally banned were both the conservative traditionalist and etatist discourse and the liberal modernization and liberty-centric political language of the liberals. This fate befell all discourses that were not under state control, such as the ethnicist language of the extreme right, the political idioms of the "third way" advocates, the ethno-protectionist plebeian language of the socialist populist movement, the idiom of the civic radicals, and the leftist and extreme leftist socialists. The builders of the totalitarian state eliminated the public spaces, ousted their actors, and stifled all forms of expression that did not belong to the languages they selected and first of all controlled. True, these languages incorporated elements of old discourse types, but in a shattered, incomplete manner, adopting some of their parts, especially various enemy images. It applies in a general but varying measure that nobody had the possibility to elaborate upon what they were going through. It is understandable that the unelaborated experiences—frozen for decades, thawed after the change of regime—and former political languages resurfaced and even today act with an elemental force.

The outlook of the actors of the political change in Central and Eastern Europe—especially in Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Poland—was determined by the demand for liberal human rights, economic neo-liberalism, national independence, liberal democracy, and joining the West. The euphoric collective experience of 1989/90 was, however, overshadowed by a series of frustrations which were caused by the collapse of industries of the Soviet market, the disruption of middle-class society, the demise of the early welfare state, the loss of acquired rights, and the polarization of society into a few wealthy and many propertyless people. The concept of nation soon elicited ambivalent associations in many, not independently of the fact that the ideological machinery of the emerging political right appropriated the concept of nation and its related sentiments and unelaborated

traumas, degrading all this into political kitsch. On the left, the successor of the former state party soon revived the enlightened absolutist tradition of the modernizing elite, several party exponents looking back upon the Kádár era with nostalgia. More and more people came to believe that they had to choose between two schemes of the past, two authoritarian systems, Horthy's and Kádár's, as the only possible alternatives.

One of its reasons was that the experiences and humiliations of previous generations remained unspoken and unelaborated often at an individual and almost always at the community level. This, in turn, greatly hindered the emergence of the external and internal conditions of the formation of democratic communities in Hungary, and during two decades the former single pupil of the West of the region was relegated to the sluggard's bench displaying sequences of political hysterias. This situation is in no small degree attributable to the *damnosa hereditas* concealed by the consolidated surface. The inheritance of the autocratic system frozen up and undigested by the one-party state was thawed after the peaceful regime change, the constitutional revolution and its discrete components began to be reactivated, including the enemy images of earlier discourses, without a positive system of references. "Liberal" and "conservative" had become state-party stigmas in line with fascist, reactionary, rightist, and bourgeois. In reaction to that, at first conservative then liberal, intellectual fashions and renaissances unfolded in the nineteen eighties. The attempts by liberal and conservative advocates to find predecessors did not favor an objective approach to any kind of liberalism and conservatism.

Liberalisms and conservatisms have been swept away by intellectual and media fashion trends worded in terms of various political languages. For those who speak and write in the one-time conservative and ethno-protectionist idiom, the organic value-oriented development controlled by the paternalist state and the health of the national organism was and is threatened by *internal and external foes*—formulated in the dichotomy of ethnic Hungarian vs. non-Hungarian. For those who speak and write in the former Marxist idiom, the realization of the classless society and progress leading to it was and is hindered by feudal vestiges and reaction (personified by anti-modernity, the nation). Communist indoctrination also placed the political actors along the dichotomies of progress vs. reactionary position and working people vs. ruling class. Social and political classification also implied serious moral qualification: the representatives of the working class were right by definition, while the members of the ruling class embodied the moral evil. Under the revolutionary mythology, those who were making efforts for the working class regarded the ruthless applica-

tion of revolutionary violence not as a necessary evil but as something desirable and unavoidable. What the conservative, ethno-protectionist, Marxist socialist, and communist political discourses had in common was their preoccupation with their respective enemy images. What one learns from them first of all is their view of the antithesis of progress and nation; they concentrated on what and who was threatening the desirable future and its bearers. The conservatives and ethno-protectionists saw liberalism and the liberals as their main foes. The Marxist socialist enemy image was dominated by feudal reaction (implying both liberalism and conservatism). The communist representation of the foe centered on reaction (feudal and bourgeois reaction encompassing everyone, liberals and conservatives included, except the speaker designating the enemy and his fellow thinkers). The conservatives' vision of the liberal foe ranged from liberal nationalists and anti-nationalist liberals to radicals identified with anti-national liberals, socialists, communists, and Jews. The ethno-protectionists reinterpreted this enemy image in such a way that anti-liberalism and anti-Semitism could be paired with antipathy towards all non-Hungarian ethnic communities. The feudal reaction concept of Marxist socialists covered the clergy and the nobility as conservative reactionary forces, while in communists' enemy representation this image was extended so much that all belonging here received the stigma of fascist, reactionary, and conservative, and were consequently excommunicated. These enemy images were revived and are actively present today together with the different schemes of racial, ethnic, and class enemies. What aggravates the situation is that the traumatized earlier generations have unwittingly passed on their accursed legacy to their descendants, and these feed the political hysterias capitalized by the voracious powers that be.

The first step toward objectivity is establishing distance from the different kinds of enemy images and their political idioms. This effort can be promoted by the understanding and contextualizing of the sources and the literature, instead of their expropriating elaboration. This is a pressing need because, although several pioneering works have appeared on different variants of the Hungarian liberalisms and conservatisms, there are no serious unbiased syntheses.¹⁵ This work is urgent because the political poles of the constitutional revolution and the ensuing period have up till now been described in terms of different conspiracy theories.

¹⁵ Varga (1971, 1980a, 1980–1981, 1982a, 1983, 1993), Kecskeméti (1989, 2008), Miklós Szabó (1989, 2001, 2003, 2006). See also, Zsuzsa L. Nagy (1977, 1980, 2002), Bérenger and Kecskeméti (2005), and Evans (2006).

Conservatism

Its Definition and Types

In colloquial usage, the connotations of the term “conservative” and its collocate, “radical,” imply an opposition, an antithesis. The most frequent concepts associated with conservatism, suggesting social and political equilibrium and identifying it with the aristocratic social order, are authority, tradition, traditional values, order, history, social and political hierarchy, aristocracy, status quo, custom, and organic social development. By contrast, the somewhat constructed series of concepts associated with radicalism include “the people,” the search for a utopia of social justice (achieved possibly even through violence), and the goal and challenge of radical renewal. Radicalism lays stress on the universalism of natural law, equal civil rights, and collective self-government contra order by divine grace and feudal social organization, which spiritualizes the military and ecclesiastical functions and regulates personal rule based on merit and dignity. The conservative preserving attitude is tied to traditional frames, historical forms, and the hierarchically conceived frameworks of the aristocratic societal organization. This is further developed into the “nation” in terms of relativity as well as a sense of reality, whereas the demand for radical transformation is linked with universal validity and the ideal state of society.

The conservatism vs. radicalism antithesis is not merely used conversationally, it is a historical outcome of the specificities of the dual self-definition of the conservatives’ and radicals’ rationales reproduced ever since the French Revolution. Conservatives have always accused their adversaries of overt or covert radicalism, the subversion of the social order, the destruction of a social organization ensuring the balance of quality elements, the promotion of an attitude determined by sheer quantities, and the greed for power of a selfish and unrestricted minority. The radicals have also been quick to condemn those of a different opinion from theirs as bene-

ficiaries of the *ancien régime*, and as reactionaries by tagging them conservative. The self-perception of conservatives and radicals was determined by the diabolic nature of the image they created of each other, a conspiracy psychosis comparable to an exorcism of a secularized theology.

The self-definitive schemes that evolved and became fixed were precipitations of real historical experiences: the conservatives saw their adversaries in the place of the Jacobins of the French revolution, and the radicals recognized the advocates of the *ancien régime* in the conservatives. The sterile figures of the *professional revolutionary* and the *obdurate reactionary*—to use István Bibó's labels—imply the separation and polarization of two narrow, rather mythic concepts of the human being in which past and future, tradition and norm, custom and reason, continuity and creativity, are contrasted irreconcilably. This dichotomous thinking evaluates the opposite elements on the basis of whether the indictment is presented by the prophets of the system of privileges based on birth or by those of revolutionary messianism.¹ The colloquial connotations and their emotive charges are fixations of the polarization of these self-identifications.

Modern European conservatism emerged in response to the challenges of various enlightenments and to the eighteenth-century American and French revolutions, its contents being the legitimation of the personal power of monarchic rule, the order by divine grace, and the system of privileges by birth as the valid system of norms questioned by these challenges. Beside and beyond radicalism, it was more and more strongly confronted by liberalism, an ideological and political trend which advocated the society of free owners in which nobody and nothing could have absolute power. Liberalism, representing the different associations of individuals with independent judgement and independent existence (disposal over property), and the value system of personal freedom, mainly wished to emancipate the society of property owners from the absolutist power of the state and to prevent the state from ruling over society.

To achieve this, liberals wished to sever society from the state, the private person from the citizen, and to build up the institutional checks and balances of the protection of individuals against the teeth of state intervention, to separate the executive, legislative, and judiciary powers from each other, and to create a system of personal rights for individuals. The initial

¹ See, Bibó (1991a), 421–521, esp. 447–468, (1986–1990), 3: 5–123, Talmon (1960a, 1960b, 1991), Brinton (1965), Arendt (1979), 21–178, 215–281, (1993), and Furet (1994, 1999, 2000, 2006). Cf. Ferrero (1941, 1961, 1968, 1972) and Berlin (2000, 2002, 2003, 2006).

attempts of the aristocracy to curb absolute monarchic power were joined by the middle strata's efforts to abolish state absolutism and transform the society based on privileges by birth, to change the aristocratic social establishment, and decrease the weight of the aristocracy. Liberalism, however, regarded the have-nots as peripherals, who could not become citizens with full rights unless they became property owners and individuals independent from any kind of paternalism. This meant that they relegated the greater part of society beyond their horizon and provided ample ground for conservative and socialist criticism alike.²

With the exception of Great Britain (where state absolutism was curbed since 1688, and autocracy ceased), conservatism often became the opponent of constitutional government and an ally to absolute power in the first half of the nineteenth century. In France, the absolutist state had other roots than the institution of royalty as well, drawing on some traditions of the republic, then the imperial government and the newer imperial traditions incorporating general suffrage. From among these traditions, French conservatism chose that of the king's absolute power: their classic authors, Joseph de Maistre and Louis de Bonald, expounded and justified the traditional ideas of an establishment by divine sanction. Since Germany was not a unified state before 1871, the hyper-aristocratic social organization was coupled with a system of provincial sovereigns and regional principalities, hence the thinkers of traditional German conservatism—Justus Möser, Adam Müller—were committed to the territorial principalities. This tradition was broken by Otto von Bismarck, who ushered in the German attempts at unification, opting for *Realpolitik* after 1848.³

In the United Kingdom, conservatism represented a cautious variant of the liberal traditions of the aristocratic political life displaying the ever-increasing influence of the middle class, even though a group of young Tory aristocrats led by Benjamin Disraeli and Lord Derby sent out feelers towards the radical movements. Whig and Tory politics were differenti-

² See, Constant (1997), 235–260, Ruggiero (1959), 1–90, 347–443, Laski (1936), 237–264, Hayek (1976), 11–21, 103–117, 397–411, Berlin (1990), 334–443, Ryan (1979), 153–193, 253–269, Miklós Szabó (1989), 47–74, 93–108, (1995), 8–22, (2001), Arblaster (1984), Ludassy (1984), 151–202, and Gray (1996).

³ See, Bibó, (1991b), (1993), 9–125, (1997), 19–166, (1986–1990), 1:295–635, esp. 365–482, Allmayer-Beck (1959), Kaltenbrunner (1972), 139–329, Greiffenhagen (1977), Stegmann, Wendt, and Witt (1983), 1–198, Ludassy (1984), 7–150; (2004), 79–112, Miklós Szabó (1989), 7–46, 93–108, (1995), 50–54, (2003), 11–99, Nisbet (1996), Kontler (1997, 2000), and *Tanulmányok a konzervativizmus történetéből* [Studies in the history of conservatism] (2002).

ated not by a rejection of radicalism but by the degree of its utilization or neutralization, and this differentiation was hard to discern at times. In Europe, British foreign policy was aimed to sustain the equilibrium of the Holy Alliance, to push back the French rival, and contain the eastern expansion of Russia. Benjamin Disraeli's political pamphlets of 1835/36 were determined by social mobility comprehended on the pattern of ennobling, while the inviolability of the aristocratic social organization was self-evident even in the writings of Thomas Carlyle, James Fitzjames Stephen, and Lord Salisbury some thirty to fifty years later, as well. This holds despite the fact that the two reform acts of enfranchisement (especially the second) extended the boundaries of the body politic and thereby forestalled the explosive transformation of the political structure.⁴

At one end of the scale of nineteenth-century conservatisms was the British conservatism of a liberal function, the opposite end being taken by the openly autocratic conservatism of the Russian Empire (preserving and modernizing Byzantine and Mongolian traditions as well). The contemporaneous European—French, German, Italian, Spanish, Austrian and Hungarian—conservatisms were ranged in between these two poles. All were determined by the challenge of liberalism and the influence of the absolutist state.

The theoretical core of (primarily the German) conservative thinking was described by Karl Mannheim as the refutation of the conceptual and methodological specificities of the liberal thought based on natural law—actually as the synonym of political romanticism. He propounded his ideas in a now classic study (obviously generalizing and projecting back to his early twentieth-century experiences). In his view, the conservatives discarded the tenets of the natural state, the social contract, popular sovereignty, and inalienable human rights. In place of reason, they put history, life, and the nation. Compared to the static and rational conception of reality, they advocated the dynamic and irrational character of reality. Against the liberal demand for the universal validity of equality, they put subjectivity and a prearranged order, individual differences, and the organic nature of society, which implies the preclusion of deliberate and violent changes. Against the natural law concept of the universality of liberty, entailing uniformization, the conservatives were partly right in

⁴ See, Disraeli (1913), 111–232, 327–365, Carlyle (1872), 339–392, Stephen (1967), Smith (1972), Vincent (1979), Hanham (1969). For their interpretation, see, Kitson Clark (1962), Smith (1967), Cowling (1967), Himmelfarb (1967), Smout (1969, 1986), Blake (1970), Vincent (1972), Dickinson (1977), Gash (1979), and Colley (1992).

proposing that the assertion of individual differences was the guarantee of individual freedom. Their solution, however, relegated freedom to the private sphere, removed from the universal plane in their theory. At the level of social publicity, every individual was entitled to the liberty implied by his social position. The external measure of internal liberties was social position, and hence everyone's place in the unquestionable hierarchy determined one's possibilities. This reasoning led to the thesis of the qualitative inequality between individuals and to the justification of the sole validity of a social establishment based on the system of privileges.⁵

Several thinkers maintain that the principles of English conservatism (a main point of reference for conservatives)—traditionalism, organicism, and political skepticism—derived from the recognition of the moral imperfection of human nature from which it follows that there are and there can be no absolute solutions in the human realm. By self-definition, the conservatives pursue a politics that respects the past but does not shackle the present, and it does not aim at absolute solutions, being realistic in judging possibilities and human nature, adjusting flexibly to reality, that is, being reformist.⁶

Conservative thought was determined by methodological collectivism, an organic view of society, epistemological empiricism, and skepticism (almost agnosticism), and first of all anthropological pessimism.

"Conservatism" as a political term, associated with the diverse connotations of order and authority or realism and retrogression, had a dual orientation at its emergence alluding to the antitheses of conservatism vs. radicalism and absolutism vs. liberalism. "Innovative" conservatism was tied to England, while on the Continent "reformist conservatism" was more part of the rhetoric than political strategy. Yet, unlike the conservatism vs. radicalism and the absolutism vs. liberalism antitheses, the conservative viewpoints—of a society structured and organized by the state, the inevitable imperfection of human nature determined by original sin, a holistic methodological starting point, and epistemological skepticism—were not merely sterile conceptual contents but could be, and should be, referred to the different political situations and concrete attempts at social organization.

⁵ See, Mannheim (1953), 74–164, esp. 94–119. For its interpretation, see Kettler, Meja, and Stehr (1984), 71–85.

⁶ See, Oakeshott (1975, 1983, 2001), Gilmour (1977), Quinton (1995), Scruton (1995), and Nisbet (1996).

Hungarian Conservatives: Context and Dilemmas

In the European spectrum, Hungarian conservatism displays divergent traits (or at least specific features) from the rest. It emerged in a country in which the liberal challenge was very strong, while the absolutist state—though its absolute power was delimited by an institutional system of the estates—represented foreign suppression. At the same time, more than half of this country's population was not Hungarian by nationality. International diplomacy reckoned with the Kingdom of Hungary until the end of the eighteenth century. From 1804, when the Austrian Empire was founded, it was not more than a province—a crown land—of the Habsburg Empire. From the inside, the picture was different. The area of the Kingdom of Hungary constituted a land of special legal standing within the empire. The state—a feudal constitutional monarchy—disposed over several elements of fictitious and real independence—interpreted often differently on this side of the river Leitha and beyond. The most important of these elements were the country's own legislature, judiciary, and public administration. Despite this, the sovereign of the country had its seat outside the country—in Vienna—the country had no army of its own, all substantial issues were determined in Vienna, and its authority was not even formally devolved upon a part of the hereditary territories of the Hungarian crown.

Act 10 of 1790 makes the position of the country clear by political law: the head of state of the country was identical with the sovereign of the Habsburg Empire, that is, there was personal union between the two states. Studying the actual decision making mechanisms, however, one finds that the decision makers practically always subordinated the Hungarian causes to the interests of the empire. For the senior officials of the empire the Hungarian Kingdom was one of the crown lands, which was, however, harder to handle because its diet of estates (*Stände*), *Prelati et Barones*, and the nobility of the counties had the right to vote for taxes and recruitment. In the western part of the empire, it was the extension of the licenses of the degenerate and ineffective provincial diets (*Landtag*) that became the starting point of constitutionality.⁷ The western half of the

⁷ Most notable plans to transform the political structure of the Hereditary Lands: Andrian-Werburg (1843, 1843–1847). Earlier plans and interpretations of the situation: Redlich (1920–1926), 1/bk. 1: 59–88, esp. 77, 1/bk. 2:20–22), Kann (1964), 1:65–68, 2:97–100, (1980), 290–299, 367–405, Jászi (1982), 79–80, 101–158, 336–357, 551–561, and Evans (1991, 2006). On the precedents: Benda (1978), Balázs (1987), and Poór (1988, 2003).

empire was namely governed autocratically, whereas in Hungary the *ancient* constitution precluded absolutism in theory and designated the whole *Constitutio*, the aristocratic privileges, and the ambivalent attitude toward the empire manifested in the *Pragmatica Sanctio* and Act 10:1790. This relationship was interpreted in Vienna and Pozsony differently. Of course, the feudal constitutionality was present amidst the prevailing conditions of absolutism, but there was constant tension between the two, all the more as the aristocratic constitutionality only affected the privileged strata, the decisive majority of the population—the working and tax-paying masses, the *misera plebs contribuens*—being shut out from it.

Since the king of Hungary was not a national king, the typical attitude of conservative parties idealizing the national dynasties had no credit within the given political structure. Hence, loyalty to the dynasty could not be identified with loyalty to the nation; quite contrarily, the pro-court or aulic tradition meant commitment to the empire and its implied non-national character. Nor was it self-evident to identify the cause of the majority religion—Roman Catholicism—with the cause of the nation and the cause of the dynasty, whereas in England—where the Anglican religion and the dynasty of Orange-Hannover could be matched—one could defend the cause of the nation by defending the religion. It was notably the Habsburg-led Counter-Reformation that ensured the emergence of the Catholic faith as a state religion through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with quite some political force. The hostility of the Hungarian estates towards the Habsburgs was traditionally linked up with Protestantism.

It was hard to be a devout advocate of the national past, the traditions, and constitutionality—beyond sheer verbalism—because it also meant the claim to an independent or at least self-ruled Hungary. An independent Hungary, in turn, could not be conserved but had to be created as *de facto* there was no independent statehood. Faced with the explosive phenomena of capitalization (seen primarily in the perishing of small existences, or pauperization), the “social protective,” paternalistic disposition had two outlets: the feudalist protection of peasantry (rejecting bourgeois modernization) or the representation of collective and individual self-determination pointing beyond the liberal position. In this way the paternalist elements of the conservative critique of modernization only became predominant within Hungarian conservatism in the last third of the nineteenth century. Although the protection of constitutionality and society were recurrent formulae of the system of roles and values of Hungarian conservatives, their weight, credibility, and persuasive force are highly questionable.

The Hungarian conservatives faced the dilemma that if they professed to be national—*Magyar*—conservatives, there was neither political nor individual freedom to be conserved, and instead they would have to fight for the guarantees of independence and individual liberties. That, in turn, did not fit in with the traditional conservative role. What there was to conserve was foreign absolutism, the system of aristocratic privileges, and the backwardness of the country.

If they undertook the representation of the interests of the empire (equal to foreign absolutism), they would no longer be *Magyar* conservatives but represent the Hungarian crown land of the empire, and thus they would be imperial conservatives in Hungary. Another question was how the conservation of the European balance of power, the imperial political structure of the Austrian Empire, and the Hungarian traditional aristocratic societal organization (each and all together connected to the Concert of Europe of the Holy Alliance, which was challenged by the nation-building attempts of Greece, Poland, Belgium, and the French revolution of 1830 already) could harmonize with efforts to achieve equilibrium in the long run.

From the seventeenth century onward, the Hungarian policy of the Habsburg Empire alternated between imperial centralization and compromises with the conservative estates. The policy of imperial centralization was usually coupled with reform initiatives. The aim of the latter—Joseph II's enlightened absolutist attempt—was a powerful civilized empire. When it failed, the Vienna government resigned—again—from launching both the reforms and centralization, and within the frames ensured by absolutism, it tolerated and even guaranteed the inviolability of aristocratic privileges. The traditional conservative political forces in Hungary could not and did not want to initiate reforms but rested content with the preservation of the *status quo*. The conservative compromise that evolved in the late eighteenth century appeared practicable until 1811/12, and the misleading dichotomy of foreign reform initiatives and the privilege protecting nation appeared firm and unquestionable. As a result, the reformist proposals (*Operata Systematica*) of the regular committees delegated by the diet of 1790/91 collected dust almost untouched for four decades. The opposition during Joseph II between centralization and the constitution protecting estates was followed by the period of conservative compromise in the early nineteenth century. In the next decade and a half there were renewed absolutist attacks and resistance by the estates with reference to the *ancient* constitution. The traditional distribution of roles first changed in the next decade: in the first six years of the 1830s, the government and the conservative estates found themselves several times

on the same side in defense of the medieval constitution. The government and the feudal majority found a common platform against the “subversive” activity of the liberal reformers, which criticized the foundations of the *ancient* constitution. In the last years of the decade the situation changed again when the government (wishing to overcome the liberal reformers) initiated lawsuits of treason, which sent the traditional (gravaminalist) opposition on the Hungarian political stage to join the liberal reformers in defense of the freedom of speech.

In 1795, when the Hungarian Jacobins were beheaded, the possibility of any reform initiative was eradicated, the government appeared relentless and the elements of the political public were either accomplices of the power, or terrorized and silenced. By contrast, in 1836/39 the government remained comparatively moderate relative to its aims (true, there was no anti-Habsburg conspiracy, only a government conspiracy psychosis), and the situation was also radically different from forty years earlier. The accused persons were not so much alone as Hajnóczy and his comrades had been earlier. The government’s intimidating efforts incensed the gravaminalist opposition, and also undervalued the weight of the liberals in the variegated Hungarian political scene, and with an eye to international tensions it was eventually forced to yield.

The “specter” of the French Revolution was already far back in the past, but the revolution of 1830 and its developments filled the Viennese government with anxiety. The trials of disloyalty caused fermentation in the Hungarian political climate as violations of the freedom of speech. The eastern question and the possible isolation of the Habsburg Empire owing to the conflict between the Ottoman Empire and Egypt contributed to the relative leniency of the Austrian politicians amidst the reshuffling of the European concert of powers and its monarchic-feudal legitimacy, but the activation of the Hungarian public, first of all by the heroic endurance of Baron Miklós Wesselényi and Lajos Kossuth, also played a great role in the granting of amnesty.

Hungarian society—as is known—was among those in which capitalism was slow and cumbersome. Over three quarters of the population belonged to the variegated peasantry. The middle class and the intelligentsia were a much smaller group than their social weight would lead one to expect. Public life and public offices were dominated by the nobility, a social class unified in the old sense of the Estate (*Stand*) but in fact increasingly heterogeneous and disintegrating. The overwhelming majority of the nobility were “common nobles,” proportionately the largest and the poorest group of non-commoners in Europe, Poland excepted. The land-

owning gentry comprised the node of the nobility. The aristocracy was the smallest in Europe, some two hundred and twenty clans, about six or seven hundred families in all; it was also one of the wealthiest of Europe's aristocracies (even including several heavily indebted families). The majority were magnates rising in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with grants from the court, tied to the monarchy with privileges. The society was also heterogeneous ethnically: a great part was Magyar (about half in the Hungarian Kingdom and less than one-third in the Transylvanian Principality). In the northern areas the majority of the population was Slovak (between a sixth and a seventh of the total population of the country), in the northeast there were Carpatho-Ukrainians, in the towns quite a lot of Germans, and in the south Croats and Serbs. In Transylvania, Romanians amounted to over half the population.

Roman Catholicism was the country's official religion, with most of the population adhering to it. Other "accepted" religions were the main Protestant denominations (Calvinist and Lutheran) and Orthodox churches (the latter primarily among the Serbian and Romanian inhabitants), and the Jewish faith was "tolerated."

Participation in politics was the right of the aristocracy, the higher clergy, to a lesser extent the representatives of towns and the lower clergy, and the nobility in the counties with a decisive weight.

The king of Hungary resided in Vienna, the feudal government offices were in Vienna and Buda. The Royal Hungarian Chancellery (the office that framed the king's ordinances and proposed the royal rescripts) was located in Vienna, while the Royal Hungarian Chamber (actually the treasury) and the *Consilium Locumtenentiale* or Royal Hungarian Governor-General's office (the chief executive organ) were presided over by the Palatine in Buda. The bicameral diet meeting in Pozsony included members of the aristocracy and the higher clergy, the bannerets, the nobility of the counties, and the representatives of the free *civitates regales* (towns under the king's judiciary) and the chapters. The peasantry living in personal dependence had no political rights, so their interests received no representation at the diet unless some of the estates embraced their cause.⁸

⁸ The summary is based on Horváth (1886), 2:3–165, Ballagi (1888), Benda (1952–1957), vols. 2–3, Trócsányi (1965), Barta (1966), Varga (1971), Szabad (1977), Benda (1978), 105–212, Szabad (1979), 477–478, 581–608, Benda (1980), Vörös (1980b), Gergely (1980), Csáky (1981), Erdmann (1984), Pajkossy (1984), Szabad (1986), and Poór (1988, 2003).

Before the appearance of the liberal reformers, the entire Hungarian political life was predominated by traditional conservatism, the poles of which were marked by the aulic or court party (supporting any government identified with the sovereign) and the gravaminalist opposition who kept an account of the government's encroachments and demanded redress for grievances. The gravaminalists, in defense of feudal privileges, opposed the government's encroachments. A subgroup to this opposition was the mercantile opposition who protested against the economic subjugation of the realm.

The visionless, defiant attitude of the gravaminalist opposition is suggestively and sarcastically described in Ferenc Kölcsey's diary entry of January 12, 1833:

Gentlemen, my dear colleagues, what is patriotism? The answer is: opposition! And what is the opposition? Answer: Negation of anything the court and the *personalis* maintain! But what if the court happens to tell the truth? Answer: We won't tolerate that. Balog, the elder, *requiescat in pace*, argued for something with fire and sword for twenty nine days, and when the *personalis* eventually surrendered and was about to accept it on the thirtieth: the old man would jump to his feet and rush over to the opposite. After all, what comes from above cannot be good. What an unfailing compass, my dear friends! At least we always know what we have to deny. And patriotism being rejection, we may never miss this way.⁹

Kölcsey's succinct description refers to the gravaminalist opposition, the traditional conservative opposition comprised of lesser nobility who were the majority of the Lower Table (lower house).

The poles of the traditional Hungarian conservatism were constituted by the aulic (pro-court) aristocrats and the gravaminalists, the upper house and the majority of the lower house, the Habsburg camp and the national camp, the *Staatspartei* and the *Landespartei*, the aristocrats and the common nobles, and the *labanc* and the *kuruc*.¹⁰ The pro-court side represented a dynastic loyalty that also meant loyalty to the empire, the government, and the absolutist state machinery. The gravaminalists constituted the opposition to the position of the court, defended the prerogatives of the nobility, and safeguarded the immemorial *ancient* constitution em-

⁹ Kölcsey (1832–1833), 34–35.

¹⁰ From Latin *crucitürk* "Christian Turk," a term in pamphlet literature in the Holy Roman Empire. After the Ottoman domination of Hungary (1526–1686), it meant the advocates of Hungarian independence from Austria as against "labanc" people on the Austrian side (as mercenaries, or in their conception, attitude, etc.) From Hung. *loboncok* "shock-headed" [probably for the 18th century fashion of wigs].

bodily the privileges of the estates. They protected the constitution, which went well with dynastic loyalty to the Hungarian king when he observed the laws.

All this offered itself to falsification by the imperial journalists, the Vienna government, and later the Hungarian conservatives on several counts. The gravaminalist opposition was identified with the Hungarian opposition and its characteristics were projected onto the “subverters” who attacked and reinterpreted the foundations of the aristocratic constitutionality: the Hungarian liberal reformers. The government officials in Vienna saw the adherence to the constitution as a symptom of an anachronistic, “Asian” condition, which pitted backward Hungary against Europe and set the conservatism of the feudal grievances against imperial “progress.” Political writers close to the Vienna government frequently condemned the Hungarian nobility’s prerogatives and their insistence on these privileges in their pamphlets and later in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* of Augsburg and Leipzig. They increasingly identified the liberal reformers in their argumentations with the other opposition of feudal gravaminalist conservatism, also drawing on the ideals of the Enlightenment or using one or another of its elements. Meanwhile, in the Hungarian diet, the Viennese government defended the privileges and the aristocratic constitution together with the gravaminalist opposition and against the liberal reformers.¹¹

The Hungarian conservative political writers of the 1840s acted in much the same manner. Presenting themselves as defenders of the Hungarian constitution, they endowed the liberal reformers, tagged as a self-elected minority, with the characteristics of the defiant attitude of the other *kuruc* gravaminalist opposition. One reason might have been that the court-party conservatives did rightly discern their continuity with the royalist tradition of old Hungarian conservatism, modeling their liberal reformist adversaries on the pattern of gravaminalist opposition. This view was presumably not only shaped by the platitudes of imperial conservative journalism and the experience of their fathers, but also by the Hungarian liberal criticism of the conservative policy of grievances. However, the Hungarian conservatives projected the image of the gravaminalist opposition onto the Hungarian liberals, adopting the procedure of the Austrian imperial conservatives. This they did so successfully that this mythic perception became decisive in historiography not only from Antal Szécsen to

¹¹ Piringer (1810–1816) and Gustermann (1811). For their interpretation, see Poór (1988), 162–169, (2003). See also, Berg (1842), *Oesterreich und Ungarn* (1843).

Gyula Szekfű, but traces of it can be detected in foreign and Hungarian historical literature and political writings even today.

Obviously, the liberal reformers partly identified with the gravaminalist opposition. The protection of the constitution was a suitable slogan to mobilize with, and by it liberals encouraged a massively heterogeneous camp to enter the political arena, not to fight for the traditional conservative goals (protection of privileges) but exactly to transform the medieval constitutionality, force absolutism to retreat, and to build a modern constitutionality. Defense of the constitution was a role that the liberal reformers already tried to use in the 1830s to put through certain reforms and build up a system of guarantees for a constitutional government. On two occasions the protection of the aristocratic constitution became particularly significant: before and during the diet of 1839/40 in defense of free speech at the time of the trials of treason, and before and during the diet of 1847/48 against a new tangible advance of the autocratic government by appointing officials (called administrators) to the counties. The actual content of these protests was not the protection of the system of privileges but the supplanting of absolutism and the reinterpretation of the *ancient* constitution in order to introduce a modern liberal constitution. The formal elements familiar to the attitude of the gravaminalist opposition led several analysts to project the attitude of the gravaminalists onto the activity of the liberal reformers, although it was precisely the Hungarian liberal reformers that disrupted the Hungarian political life, which had been divided between the poles of the court party and the party of grievances.

The Liberal Challenge: Nation-Building through Reforms

“The interest of the people has at least three different interpretations here, to reconcile or unite which we are neither able, nor willing: the interest of the nobility, that of the bourgeoisie, and that of the peasantry. The first has its struggle with the court for constitutional power, pushes back the second, and exercises the patron’s superiority over the third, keeping it subordinated. The second—as it stands today—is not true interest, for only the interest of the urban oligarchy is alive and blazoned forth; the interests of the urban population is silent and trampled down. While the latter is silent, the former bows its head to the court and wrangles with the nobility. The third has never been uttered in its entirety, nor will it be easy to utter it even today. As long as the first’s contemptuous patronage refuses to accept it as a comrade at arms, the court can put on a wondrous disguise pretending to protect the third from the first. And indeed, this wondrous disguise has been put on since Ferdinand I; as a result of the disillusion over this, several altruists among the best noblemen have taken a wrong view of the municipal interests of the nobility, and instead of trying to unite them with the interest of the peasantry as fast as possible, they are inclined toward the court and wish to protect the suppressed in this way. Protected they can be, but they will never be elevated in this way.”¹

At first sight Kölcsey’s program may seem conservative, paternalist, with a demand of gradual improvement. A second reading, however, makes it clear that the new role of the nobility differs from the old one in more than just paternalistic protection; it also differs in the interpretation of privileges and constitutionality. The traditional opposition recognized as its task the protection of privileges and fought for the conservation of the *ancient* constitution. What Kölcsey’s wording conveys is that the privileges should be extended to the bourgeoisie and the peasantry, which implies the reinterpretation of constitutionality and the creation of new guarantees beside, and in place of, the traditional ones. He elevates the un-

¹ Kölcsey (1832–1833), 50.

privileged “within the bulwark of the constitution,” whereby he makes them interested in maintaining constitutionality. In this way, aristocratic constitutionality representing the world of privileges changes character and becomes the point of departure into the world of freedom.

Kölcsey’s concise and vivid passage was the reformulation of an earlier thought. Perhaps the first to put to paper the idea of admitting the common people into the “bulwark” of constitutionality was József Hajnóczy, but in the late eighteenth century it did not become a factor influencing political discourse. The need to reinterpret constitutionality and transform the traditional political role of the nobility under the banner of the “unification of interests” spread more widely in 1831/32 during the county debates over the projects proposed by the commissions of the 1790/91 diet. During the polemics in the counties the liberal reformists initiating the reconciliation of interests already had a say, but it was in the diet of 1832/36 that their group had become an important actor on the political scene. Although the government and the traditional conservatives of the diet managed to prevent their propositions from being accepted, the polemics in the diet and their publication in the *Országgyűlési Tudósítások* (Dietal reports) shaped public opinion, and through the sheer existence of the liberal opposition the basic structures of the traditional political life in Hungary came to be questioned. The trials of high treason held in 1836/39 failed to eradicate the liberal reformers led by Baron Miklós Wesselényi.

The key ideas of the liberals were worded anew by Ferenc Deák, the new leader of the opposition, in a deputy report at the general assembly of Zala county on July 27, 1840.

Industry has two great motors: liberty and property. There are two great motives that can fill the citizen with strength and enthusiasm to protect the country, and these motives are: liberty and property. Only two forces can safely tie the people to the country and to the law, and these two magic forces are: liberty and property. The law that our legislation has passed about the redemption of the peasants’ feudal obligations has laid down the first foundation of the blessings of liberty and property, and from this basis our nation will certainly rise into a nicer future. This law increases the number of free property owning citizens, and it is only through them that a nation acquires its strength, for freedom will not become less in value but rather more in strength and security when shared by others ... The road of progress is difficult because thousands of conflicting private interests have to be overcome, for in defense of themselves, they condemn each move as designed to subvert the constitution; but it is important because it is the future of the nation that depends on every move ... In times of yore, our forebears knew but a single holy obligation to their country amidst the incessant bloody fights: to defend its rights and independence with blood. In our age, this sacred obliga-

tion is coupled with another one: to develop the latent potential of the nation, to give new life to industry and to lift the country into prosperity amidst the blessings of peace bought for so much blood, the country that our ancestors had won with their blood and our other forebears have kept for us with their blood ... In constitutional nations where the majority makes the decisions, every move is safe when the proposed ideas have been put through by the persuasive power of the reasons and the strength of truth, and it cannot fail if there is perseverance of the purpose.²

In line with Kölcsey's thought, Deák envisioned the prosperity of the nation in the broad sense by increasing the number of property owning citizens. The "progress of the nation" is reminiscent of the principal criterion of the *greatest happiness for the greatest number* quoted so often from Jeremy Bentham, who borrowed it from Joseph Priestley. "Property" meant the right of non-nobles to have land, wealth, and office, to be members of the nation. "Nation" appears similar to the society of property owners, and, at the same time, the free political community of the free citizens. It is not Benjamin Constant's classic liberal concept of "modern liberty," the negative freedom of the individuals, and his exemption from state intervention that should come to mind in reading this "liberty." It is closer to civil liberty, the right and duty to participate in public affairs of the political community.³ What Deák added to the connotative field of liberty is the universal extension of privileges, the "positive" freedom of the *citoyen* (as it also implies the freedom of entrepreneurship). Liberty chiefly designates the realm of the political person, and property alludes to the private sphere. The nation implies both, although we might have the feeling that the political side has a more decisive weight.

The quotations from Kölcsey and Deák suggest the reinterpretation of *natio Hungarica*, rethinking the world of privileges and its transformation into a world of personal and political liberty of the free political community of the free citizens. Neither thinker separated the individual from the citizen; although the keyword of property alludes to the private sphere, liberty and nation appear to be predominated by the political connotation. The first and foremost reason is that the Hungarian liberals were not endeavoring to free a post-feudal society from the restraint of a more-or-less modern state. Instead, they had to emancipate a backward, divided, multinational, slowly progressing society, compressed within a feudal structure, from the autocracy of the imperial absolutism as well as from the system

² Ferenc Deák (1903), 1:443, 466, 468, see also, 218–260.

³ Bentham (1907). On the criterion Bentham borrowed from Priestley: Ludassy (1977), 845, (1984), 151–202, Constant (1997), 235–260, and Berlin (2002), 166–217, (2006).

of privileges, constraining those privileged to represent the unprivileged and to give them rights. The Hungarian liberals had to get the nobility—the sole possessors of political rights—to share their privileges with the unprivileged, in order that the constitutionality of the privileged should not be threatened by absolutism representing a foreign power and that absolutism could be abolished. They had to persuade the privileged to extend their boundaries and thus gradually annihilate the system of privileges itself.

The gaps between the privileged and the unprivileged on one hand, the Magyars and non-Magyars on the other were meant to be bridged by the extension of rights. The Hungarian liberals opined that those who acquired freedom and property through the unification of interests would become integrated in the emerging modern Hungarian nation in the long run, similarly to the rise of the privileged earlier. In the course of the emergence of a liberal nation-state, the dividing lines between members (nobility) and inhabitants (non-nobles of various status and nationality) of the Hungarian crown would disappear and feudal hierarchy would yield to merit as the criterion to structure society. Led by Wesselényi, then Deák, and later by Kossuth, the Hungarian liberals wished to turn the institutionalized system of privileges into a modern constitutional state, a nation-state based on popular representation, disposing over the conditions of self-determination. They started out from the realm of the privileged to relax and eventually abolish the feudal hierarchical layout of Hungarian society.

Thus, the Hungarian liberals were faced with three tasks. One was creating a modern state against foreign absolutism but starting out from the existing feudal institutions. The other was emancipating the society from the system of privileges amidst hindrances along the course of modernization. The third task was the nation-building, which would bring about new relations of cohesion and balance in a society divided into overlapping categories of Estates, classes, and nationalities; to knead the aristocratic nation and feudal society beneath the nation, the Magyars and non-Magyars, into a modern nation. These multiple and closely interrelated tasks together could liberate the society of property owners from extra-economic pressure, and emancipate society from the privilege system and the absolutist state.

During the diet of 1832/36 the liberal reformers led by Wesselényi fought for all three objectives, first of all the slackening of the frames of the feudal system, the extension of privileges, chiefly to interrupt the basic feudal relationship between landlord and peasant. In this struggle, it con-

fronted not only the traditional conservatism of Hungary, but also the “wondrous disguise” of the court as the protectors of peasants. After long parliamentary wrangling, the monarch finally rejected the bill of voluntary redemption of the peasants’ obligations with reference to the *ancient* constitution. The peasant protecting “disguise” of the court fell off and the traditional political formula was disrupted.

At the next diet, which passed the law of voluntary manumission compensation, a new group lent a new hue to the conservative spectrum. Led by Count Aurél Dessewffy, young conservative aristocrats of the upper house took a new position on the necessity of reforms departing from the earlier conservative platform. The program of the *status quo conservatives* included rejection by force, the silencing of the adversaries, and the denial of the need for reforms. By the turn of the decade, the government had become more lenient. The “*cautiously progressive*” conservatives of Hungary played a great role in inspiring and implementing the government’s novel conception about Hungary and the new policy introduced in the early 1840s. They were the ones to give a conservative answer to the liberal challenge.

The Conservative Answer: Law, Order, and Stability

*What to Preserve, What to Give Up, and
What to Modernize? (1839–1842)*

The Figure of Founding Father

The poet Mihály Vörösmarty wrote a poem about Aurél Dessewffy in the summer of 1844:

You walked a dubious path, understood by few, and if your goal was grand, untimely death has veiled it. Without reward your merit, without penalty your fault, You left the national venue buried alive. We ask ourselves anxiously now: Isn't our loss great? And the angel of holy nationality whispers: It is.

Mihály Vörösmarty, *Aurél Dessewffy*¹

István Széchenyi wished to put Aurél Dessewffy to eternal rest in his proposed Hungarian Pantheon. A year later a liberal publicist, László Szalay, declared he had been the Alexander the Great of the Hungarians, after whom only the *diadochi* (his unworthy successors) could come. In 1851 another liberal, Antal Csengery, asserted that Aurél Dessewffy would have been the Hungarian Robert Peel, had he lived long enough. A third, also liberal journalist, archeologist, and art historian, Ferenc Pulszky, only cited the last two lines of Vörösmarty's poem in 1874, as did a contemporary conservative reviewer of his work in 2007. In 1876 a conservative publicist, János Asbóth, hailed him and his comrades as the committed guards of the nation and the constitution, and nine years later he was praised by Farkas Deák as the greatest theoretical politician of the nation

¹ Vörösmarty (1972), 1:512.

who superseded party differences.² At the onset of the twentieth century a new conservative lawyer and political science professor, Mihály Réz, claimed, “History has verified him ... and disproved his opponents. What appeared as success was only the prelude to a terrible disaster. What appeared as power melted into thin air under the weight of the events. So does the popularity that used to envelope his opponent [Kossuth] but has been losing much of its radiance before the tribunal of history.”³ Then in the 1920s, the conservative historian Gyula Szekfű endorsed with the stamp of science the conservative political efforts of nineteenth-century Hungary and rehabilitated the conservative politicians, first of all Aurél Dessewffy.⁴

Posterity’s judgement of the highly talented leader of the “*cautious progressives*” of the Hungarian conservatives ranges from reservation to glorification. Today it is very fashionable again to idealize Dessewffy, who died unexpectedly at a young age.⁵

The imperial government’s confidential qualification dated 1840 of Aurél Dessewffy, the eldest son of gravaminalist opposition leader Count József Dessewffy, reads as follows:

With his behavior at the ... [1839/40] diet and some assemblies of Pest county earlier, he has proved that he wishes to serve the interests of the ruling dynasty and is capable of supporting them with great acumen, aptitude, competence, courage, and energy ... Until the closing hour of the diet he was a pillar of the conservatives. As the deputy of Sáros county in the lower house (from which function he was ousted by the machinations of the *főispán* [lord lieutenant], Baron Ignác Eötvös) he would have been far more useful to the right cause, because lacking apt speakers, the party of the loyalists was overshadowed by the opposition there. There can be no knowing whether his efforts are motivated by a true devotion to the ruling house or by his poor financial standing. However, in private conversation he has always spoken favorably and faced the temptations of the liberal magnates ... with indifference. Thereby he has won not only the praise but also the admiration of all decent people.⁶

² Széchenyi (1843), 114–128, Szalay (1845), Csengeri (1851), 282, Pulszky (1874), 41–56, and Asbóth (1876), 121–162. See also, Szécsen (1882), cf. (1883), 132–151, and Farkas Deák (1885).

³ Réz (1909), 355.

⁴ Szekfű (1922), 195–198, (1933), 153, 162–166, 428, Menczer (1972), 219–240, esp. 226–229. Cf. Schlett (1999), 266–291, Takáts (2007), 49–50, and Gyurgyák (2007), 51–54.

⁵ In Vörösmarty’s poem which suggests ambivalence, only the clearly positive last two lines are cited by Gyurgyák (2007), 51, similarly to Pulszky (1874), 41–56.

⁶ MOL, Bécsi levéltárakból kiszolgáltatott iratok. Jelentések a magyar országgyűlések tárgyalásairól, 1708–1848 [Documents from Viennese archives. Reports on the Hungarian dietal meetings, 1708–1848], Ungarischer Landtag vom Jahre 1839/40. Darstellung und

The diary notes of István Széchenyi (the enlightened conservative patriot, József Dessewffy's former polemicist) from 1841/42 concerning Aurél Dessewffy do not harmonize with the image of a statesman devoid of party affiliations. The last two entries are as follows:

December 18, 1841. Lajos Batthyány agitates ... that Deák and his colleagues shall make a separate study on the jury [i.e., in the criminal law committee/ Aurél Dessewffy was perfectly shocked ... I am not against it in view of the resultant material—let them knock themselves out ... it's not fatal. February 8, 1842. Lunch with Lajos Batthyány. Aurél Dessewffy is dying. To Lajos Batthyány: "Let's be honest: he has been so much overstrained lately and in general, independently of his illness too, that had he risen to power, he would have been aggressive. He would have had heads falling etc." Lajos Batthyány: "It is perhaps lucky then that he is passing away."⁷

None of Aurél Dessewffy's contemporaries doubted his talent but they judged his goals differently. The imperial government's characterization reveals his loyalty to the government. Széchenyi's diary entries, however, did not only allude to Dessewffy's conservative goals but also to his inclination to absolutistic methods. It is not accidental that his liberal contemporaries labeled him "the Hungarian Gentz," referring to the leader of the Austrian conservatives, Friedrich von Gentz, a supporter of Metternich. Aurél Dessewffy explicated his goals in a letter to his mother, Countess József Dessewffy née Eleonóra Sztáray, on January 25, 1842:

Anyone with a nobler frame of mind must at the age of 33 have distinct ideas and resolution concerning his own vocation. Mine is clear beyond doubt. It is: to defend Good against Evil, principles against passions, truth against errors; to make efforts for a vital government to be settled in this country; to facilitate the marriage of Order with Freedom ... It is necessary to feel the pulse of the public daily, which I am able to do now through journalism, so as to recognize the malevolence, the hatred towards wealth, order, superiority, and law, the lack of principle, utter lack of religion, morality, and all the unfortunate elements that are seething in this country and spreading at a frightening pace. We must hear the theories of anarchy turned into scholarly systems, and see the country meetings saturated with similar elements, to have a clear vision of

Charakteristik..., Regalisten, 758–760. It was widely known that the northeastern Hungarian aristocratic Dessewffy family was in debt, the income of their estate depending largely on sillage. On the financial standing of the Dessewffy clan and the efforts to assert their interests: "Névjegyzéke azon kontraktuális gazdáknak, kiktől a M[éltóság]os földesuraság földjüket elvette..., 1842. március 28 [List of contractual peasants (serfs) from whom His Lordship has taken away their land (sessio)... Mar. 28, 1842]," SZSZBML, Büdszentmihály Mezőváros Archive, 1664–1850. V. A 251. Sörös (1887), 66–81, Éble (1903), 168–170, and Sashegyi (1959), 115–128.

⁷ Széchenyi (1925–1939), 5:528, 552.

the future we are heading for unless we have verve enough to stave off the danger ... Will I be rewarded, or not? It's no concern to me; all my ambition is to influence my country effectively. I have never been able to weigh the highest interests of my country with the abominable scales of personal profit.⁸

"Evil"—represented by hatred for property, order, superiority, and law, a lack of religion and morals along with errors and passions, and disorder turned into scientific systems—is pitted against Order, against "Good." The antithesis of subversive ideas and order is reminiscent of the classic conservative traditionalism of Louis Gabriel Ambroise de Bonald. The line of argument is determined by the demand for conservation and does not suggest any aspiration to modernize even the given frames. One must keep in mind, though, that the farewell letter or intellectual testament is not a genre that is well suited to subtle details.

What differentiated the young conservative leader from the traditional conservatives was not only his temper, good penmanship, or manner of expression. Difference was also evident in his relationship with his father, the enlightened patriot thinker and classicist writer József Dessewffy, who three years earlier not only did not agree, but directly argued against his son's ideas on the limitation of the freedom of press. József Dessewffy writes:

A reply on the issue of the freedom of the press ... I have never maintained that the public opinion is the surest touchstone of objective reality, but it must also be considered ... The mistakes of opinion seemingly shared by the public, just like those of individual persons, can and must only be banished with prudence and gentleness instead of immediate and forcefully imposed solutions. One should not despise people so much that one should question the sober common sense of the majority and see our fellow men of any age, status, and condition as solely disposed to destructive and perfidious rather than constructive, elevating, and preserving emotions and passions. It is gravely mistaken to attribute the rebellions to words and books alone. No spark will fall on wet tinder, the people need drying and squeezing long before their flexibility dulled by time is flexed for a great leap ... There were revolts only where despotism either from above or from below suppressed the statements of free speech and free writing for a long time, or only permitted it one-sidedly, clinging to a suppressive method of developing nations instead of an insightful, corrective, and gentle way. All history, and particularly the history of recent times, has clearly shown that what certain statesmen, regarding themselves as practical, call theory would often have been the most practical solution. True, the implementation of the truest theory also requires a lot of practical judgements, but a false theory remains a false theory, and however clev-

⁸ Letter, Aurél Dessewffy to Countess József Dessewffy (Pest, January 25, 1842); See also, [Aurél Dessewffy], *Világ[V]*, February 26, 1842.

erly and felicitously it might be implemented, its achievements cannot be lasting once the national and cultural spirit is awakened. Several ideas that were deemed utopian by the most learned and experienced statesmen have come to be realized in time. And this will always be so, for no man of insight will say that a theory that is good and right by itself, will be good everywhere, always, and under every circumstance; what idea when, where, or how it is feasible or timely is exactly what is the subject of deliberation and the all-round public examination bridleing with explosive emotions. How do you wish to carry this out without publicity and freedom of the press? What self-conceit and contempt of other people's intellect it is for government officials to declare that they do not need to hear and deliberate the opinions of independent people on practical matters!⁹

József Dessewffy, the gifted and open minded leader of the gravaminalist-mercantile opposition, and his son, Aurél Dessewffy, the young leader of the cautiously progressive conservatives, had different views both on the rights of the traditional nobility and, more importantly, on the relationship with the government. This, in turn, brought the latter's position closer to the other traditional group of the conservative political life of Hungary, the aulic or court party. What differentiated Aurél Dessewffy from the traditional conservative platform was that he tried to give an answer to the liberal challenge and urged the government to take the initiative in Hungary. He expounded his ideas of the political situation first and foremost and most openly in a memorandum he drafted for the government on January 1, 1839, which had presumably considerable inspiration for the new conception and strategy of the imperial government to integrate Hungary in the long run and for using indirect tools. This new policy was known under the name of Imperial Chancellery (*Geheime Haus-, Hof- und Staatskanzlei*) member Karl Ernst Jarcke, but was actually masterminded by Imperial Chancellor Clemens Metternich himself.

The Overture to *Cautious Progress*: The Memorandum

The following 1839 memorandum was the first exposition of the program of *cautious progress*. A summary of the text launching the neo-conservative political trend is presented in the following paragraph:

Hungary is part of the Habsburg Empire; its development depends on the discretion and trust of the imperial government, which, in turn, de-

⁹ József Dessewffy to Aurél Dessewffy, Kassa, January 26, 1839, MTAKK, Magyar irodalmi levelezés, Dessewffy József levelestára [Hungarian literary correspondence, letters of József Dessewffy]. Cf. Aurél Dessewffy (1887), 343–349. See also, József Dessewffy (1831). For its interpretation, see Poór (1988, 2003) and Vadera (2009).

depends on the Hungarians' loyalty to the empire. Hungarian public life is predominated by ideas running counter to its interests. Influenced by the French and English ideas of liberty—and unaware of its own interests—the public voice is democratic and oppositional to the government: in the radical party, the old gravaminalist *kuruc* opposition has been revived in the form of liberalism. It idealizes the right to Hungarian self-government in terms of the omnipotence of the counties, and lays claim to being the sole mouthpiece of the public opinion. This is enabled by the representative system of the counties. Most of those who should have due weight in the county assemblies hardly have any. The higher clergy is isolated, withdrawn, and impotent. The aristocrats are not informed enough to assert their interest in the counties, and besides, they are not present in county politics. The impoverished nobles are under the thumb of the *bene possessionati* (wealthy noblemen). That is why the decisive role in running the county matters is played by the county office holders from the landowning nobility, the county administrators, the intellectuals, and the youth on the gallery. They use the county organization, which they monopolize, to disseminate oppositional views. However, the party of the conservatives is also in the making against the radicals, and should the government take back the initiative in the public affairs with a firm hand, the radical party will be pushed back. The propositions of the diet for the king provide good opportunities to initiate progress. The desirable development cannot be restricted to the promotion of material progress; the advance of moral improvement must have equal weight, constituted jointly by the reform of public administration, civil, and penal law and the strengthening of the government's influence.

The government's efficiency could be increased by pushing back the omnipotence of the counties, teaching obedience to the counties that have expropriated the legislative function, and cutting back the duration of a dietal period to less than a year. In the royal propositions of innovation, the projects proposed by the commissions of the 1790/91 and 1825/27 diets (the *operata systematica*) should be avoided lest the advocates of innovation take them as the basis for the reforms because of their all-inclusive character, given the public climate and the state of the diet. The *operata* would namely constitute the ground for radical transformation. In more peaceful times they will be very useful, but now they are extremely dangerous.¹⁰

¹⁰ Aurél Dessewffy (1887), 201–212. Cf. Aurél Dessewffy's diary notes of the 1839/40 diet, MOL, DcsIt, Familiaria, II. series, Irregestrata; Diaeta anni 1839/40, MOL, RL, Archivum

The neo-conservative politician summed up the internal requirements of the nation as follows:

(1) Business capital missing at the hand of the landowner so as to make his estate lucrative and immediately free him of debt. (2) Lack of credit law and institutions for the commercial class. (3) Discontent of the bourgeois and non-noble middle class with its subordinated position. (4) Backwardness of transportation means. (5) The collapse of the peasants under their current burdens and their inability to acquire independent status. (6) Meager authority of the government to rule and act powerfully and effectively.¹¹

Although he considered that all these internal requirements could not be changed at a single diet, the necessary changes could be started to improve the following:

(1) Establishment of a credit bank—and an office for its supervision; a cadastral register for the counties; definition of the procedure of contracting loans, strict measures against those who do not pay on time; the model could be the Prussian credit institutions. (2) To acquire a national loan of 10 million, to be used as need be for public work and transportation facilities. (3) Redemption law for the peasants without injury to the *aviticitas*. (4) Suggestion for the limitation of the votes of city deputies without prejudice to the prospected coordination to arrange the dietal status of towns. The rationale is: to classify the towns and cities, unite several small ones, election to be *à tour de rôle* now in one, now in another. (5) To enact the recommendations of the committee working out the rules of military service; to propose detailed regulation of the obligations of peasants to the county. (6) A good election law with clear-cut regulations. (7) Empowerment for the government to recall county administrators with legal sanction. (8) To deprive those of nobility who practice humiliating punishment. (9) Right for non-nobles to vote in county meetings if they have filled an office honestly for several years (grades to be defined upward) ... (10) After approval of the Pest Bank as *escompte* [discounting] bank, proposal to introduce the *codex cambio-mercantil* [law of commercial bills] experimentally and temporarily in transit trade for three years.¹²

regni, Diaetae; FN 476. For an interpretation of the memorandum, see: Andics (1975), 109–120, Varga (1982a), 9–24, esp. 15–19, 23–24, Erdmann (1984), Schlett (1999), 266–291, esp. 268, Takáts (2007), 49–52, Gyurgyák (2007), 51–54, Bérenger and Kecskeméti (2005), (2008), 243–245.

¹¹ Aurél Dessewffy (1887), 208. See, Bérenger and Kecskeméti (2005), (2008), 243–245.

¹² Aurél Dessewffy (1887), 209. *Aviticitas*: “The property laws dating back to the Middle Ages which regulated land ownership among the Hungarian nobility distinguished two types of land: that which was bestowed upon a person or family by the sovereign, and that which which was inherited from one’s forebears, i.e., land that was *avitus*. The former could be bought and sold without restrictions, but the latter to remain in the hands of the descendants. In other words, no given holder could alienate this kind of property,

All this would be to the benefit of all while none would jeopardize the constitutional order and the relationship with the hereditary lands.

Dessewffy also touched on the issue of the Hungarian language and the dietal quota of the towns in his memorandum, leaving the latter issue open: “[T]he number of votes should equal the number of towns or be less. The former is impossible, the latter won’t be accepted by the towns until a law spells it out.”¹³ He concluded that the question of the Hungarian language does not bear on the government, for the language of communication at the diet was already Hungarian, but the laws would have to be formulated in Latin for quite a long time still. However, it would be advisable for the government to make its position clear on the issue of the Hungarian language, for some thoughtless dietal statements and rash county resolutions have inspired fear in the nationalities in the annexed parts (*partes adnexae*: Croatia) that they might lose their mother tongues. Dessewffy writes:

We must know how far the government is willing to go along the grades of progress.—What do we want?—To turn the Hungarian into the common language so that anyone with a desire for culture, authority, and importance will be forced to know it—and in this way we can achieve far more than by the imposition of regulation. We must proceed with caution lest the premature suppression of the Latin language might incur scorn for the country; and also be detrimental to the interests of public administration. Three basic principles should guide us: (1) no excessive concessions to any nationality; (2) culture must not be compromised; (3) administration must not be disturbed. If these three principles are declared, Croatia will be pacified and all sensible friends of the Hungarian language will be satisfied.¹⁴

The author of the memorandum stressed that it was in the interest of both the imperial government and the Hungarian nation that the diet to be con-

for all members of the clan had virtual ownership rights. It was this right which was called *aviticitas*, and it was on the basis of this right that any member of the clan could protest the sale of such property. For all practical purposes, land of this type was treated as non-transferable. Creditors would not accept it as collateral, for they could never gain title to it, not even in case of default.” Varga (1993), 273.

¹³ Aurél Dessewffy (1887), 211.

¹⁴ Aurél Dessewffy (1887), 211. *Partes adnexae*: “A collective name for the counties and towns of Croatia, expressing that these territories were not an organic part of Hungary, but had been annexed to it. Apart from their having one and the same monarch, from the standpoint of constitutional law this meant that the representatives of Croatia attended the sessions of the Hungarian Diet, and that the laws it enacted were binding on Croatia as well. The region also had its own assembly, the *Sabor*, whose resolutions, however, had legal force only within Croatia.” Varga (1993), 276. See Miskolczy (1927), Ress (2004).

vened should not be unsuccessful, because a failure would prove that prudent progress was impossible and the constitutional order was unfeasible. It was in the interest of the Hungarian nation to come to terms with the imperial government and be loyal to it. The government, in turn, should not be suspicious of the whole of the Hungarian nation, for appeasement was the task and interest of both sides.¹⁵

Dessewffy's most influential tenet was that which posited the need for order, as well as the branding of the opposition. He asserted that the liberal opposition, which he tagged "radical," was not identical with public opinion. Socially well-delimited groups took the stage in the name of the public as general and because of the operating mechanism of the county organization they could transform the counties into a forum for their ideas. The proposal for economic reforms—credit bank, land register, national loan, military supply, regulation of peasant labor for the county, and the bills of exchange act—were innovative proposals of secondary importance voiced already for quite some time.

On the other hand, the amount of the proposed national loan of ten million actually was a noteworthy new idea. A sign of change, as compared to the dietal disputes of 1834, was the urge for a law to regulate the redemption of peasants' feudal duties, but (similarly to the optional redemption enacted by the diet of 1839/40) it mainly had theoretical rather than practical significance, being fairly abstract and leaving *aviticitas* untouched. Dessewffy's arguments concerning the Hungarian language—which also had a notable afterlife—were focused on the summit of state organization and were not dizzied by illusions of an assimilating power able to produce a modern nation through the extension of rights, but rather reckoned with the reality of individual's mobility into the nation of noblemen. The intention and envisaged possibility of preserving the old balance of privileged and unprivileged castes made the conception of creating a new equilibrium of rising classes and nationalities, and the related illusions, redundant.

In the memorandum Dessewffy proposed that the government have the initiating role. He advised that the government use direct and indirect tools to suppress the reformist opposition. This could be achieved directly, by reorganizing the diet and counties, and indirectly, by launching reforms not affecting the foundations of the system of privileges and the relationship with the empire. All this would serve to consolidate the authority and weight of the central power. The political passivity of the Hungarian pub-

¹⁵ Aurél Dessewffy (1887), 211–212.

lic, its loyalty and subordination to the imperial government was the only correct behavior, for it was not the bargaining of coequals but the adjustment of Hungary—a part of the empire—to the initiating imperial center that would promote the country's prosperity. Instead of through institutional guarantees, success would come from personal politics, informal influencing, and the acquisition of the key positions in the imperial center—that is what Dessewffy covertly suggests. He could not make such a thesis explicit in a memorandum written for the government, nor would it have been popular in the Hungarian political audience, especially after the trials of high treason. Metternich, however, did draw the conclusions.

The Chancellor wished to centralize imperial power in Hungary in the long run without disrupting the ancient constitutional order by creating the economic unity of the empire. To enhance the national political weight of the Habsburg Empire, Metternich aspired—adopting the conception of *Hofkammer* president Kübeck—to abolish the anachronistic, functionless inner tariff system and create a unified customs area (protected by external customs).¹⁶ When created, the tariff union would have conserved Hungary's subordination—so far ensured with political regulations but now through economic means. This was, however, conditional upon the transformation of the old constitutional frames.

This was the topic in Dessewffy's memorandum that could have provided inspiration for Metternich, who namely planned to preserve the old order by transforming its character, bringing the institutions of Hungarian administration closer to those of the Hereditary Lands ruled from above. That would have eradicated the main obstacle to the integration of constitutional Hungary into the empire. The Hungarian diet and the counties of the nobility were providing (limited) possibility for the emergence and organization of an autonomous political public, which could put pressure on the government to negotiate and make concessions. The Austrian reformist ideas to renew the political structure of the Hereditary Lands were therefore based on the improvement of the ancient feudal structure. Of course, the old institutional system of Hungary was also in need of an overhaul, but instead of the Cisleithanian political mechanisms, here modern bourgeois constitutionality was the goal.

¹⁶ Baron Friedrich Kübeck (1780–1855) was an “Austrian statesman ... who urged the establishment of the Austrian National Bank. In 1839, made president of the Court Assessors, and in 1840, of the Court Chancellery. He was determined to nationalize the railway network and set up the telegraph system. In 1848, he was Minister of Finance for a short while; later, president of the Reichsrat.” Varga (1993), 263.

Metternich's diagnosis of the Hungarian situation was not far from the picture revealed by the memorandum. The proposed therapy—the government's initiative role, the pushing back of the opposition by introducing innovations to keep law and order, and effecting some modernization—were probably sources of inspiration as to how to draw the Hungarian political structure closer to the absolutistically governed Cisleithanian parts of the empire, without the spectacular transformation of the *status quo*, and thus to create the preconditions for its complete economic integration.

The conception and strategy of long-term and indirect integration in the empire were elaborated by Karl Ernst Jarcke, councilor of the imperial chancellery, upon Metternich's request at the beginning of the 1840s. The memorandum he put to paper in 1841 was soon adopted by the supreme decision making organ of the Austrian Empire, the *Staatskonferenz*, as the empire's (carefully concealed) official policy concerning Hungary.

This policy was concealed from—the overwhelming majority of—the Hungarian politicians of the age. That is why Széchenyi and the centralists had illusions about the readiness of the imperial government to implement reforms. Thus, the conservatives promoted Hungary's integration into the empire by supporting the government's policy.¹⁷

Aurél Dessewffy explicated his conception of *cautious progress* in his confidential memorandum, but he also voiced some of his views—with more moderation especially when referring to the tightening of subordination—publicly in the upper house of the diet of 1839/40, at the meetings of the committee working out the first Hungarian criminal code, in the general assembly meetings of Pest County, and in the periodical *Világ* (Light) which he edited. His political writings began appearing in *Világ* a year and a half later, in the summer of 1841.

The First Liberal–Conservative Press Debate

In the summer of 1841, a polemic evolved within the liberal camp triggered off by Széchenyi's work *Kelet népe* (People of the East) written in opposition to Kossuth's *Pesti Hírlap* (Pest Journal). The debate was about the Hungarian character, the Hungarians' place in Europe, the civilizing work to be done, and the goals and strategies. In Dessewffy's interpreta-

¹⁷ See, Andics (1975), 109–142, Varga (1993), 9, 24, cf. Metternich-Winneburg (1880–1884), 6:672–676; 7:4–6, 15–17, 51–63.

tion, it was a debate between the *Pesti Hírlap* advocates of radical change hidden behind the guise of constitutionality, and those of the constitutional reform. The debate was derailed by the fact that several supporters of the constitutional reform, including József Eötvös who sided with Kossuth, stuck to the rather disputable surface elements of Széchenyi's book instead of touching upon its essence.¹⁸ Aurél Dessewffy interpreted the debate with strong words as follows:

We see the spread of something dangerous, and think an antidote, and an urgent one, is required ... The evil that *Kelet népe* discerns in *Pesti Hírlap* is neither a fancy, nor a specter ... *The accusation ... is fundamentally true, and the detrimental effect that is complained about is not a capricious fear but the sad reality.*¹⁹

Aurél Dessewffy set appearance against essence:

When someone puts "lawful progress" on the banner of his paper yet encourages and praises every authority that trespasses its lawful boundaries; when one declares respect for property but canvasses the idea of free land so heatedly that if it has repercussions, it will make all sober arrangement for redemption of land impossible; when one recommends trust in the government but disseminates false tenets daily, incessantly calling on the counties to table motions which would wholly overshadow the lawful influence of the government; when one's alleged goal is the union of different social classes while presenting each sufferer as the victim of the social system; when one speaks of sober progress but actually sings the daily praise of the youth as a social power and calls the uproars of the masses "public opinion"—in such trend[s] there is something else under the explicitly declared pleasant goals, *there is something in invisible letters between the written lines* which is felt by many an honest person but only few can clarify for themselves. That is what we condemn in *Pesti Hírlap*.²⁰

¹⁸ Baron József Eötvös (1813–1871) was a "politician, writer. Hungarian nationalist and liberal reformer, Eötvös's notions of liberalism derived from his journeys through Western Europe. As a member of the Upper House and the leader of the Centralists—who, unlike Kossuth, saw the county system as a bulwark of feudalism and thus something to be done away with—he was an ardent advocate of social and political reform throughout the 1840s. In 1848, he was Minister of Education and Religious Affairs in the Batthyány Government. He resigned with the rest of the Government in September of 1848, and went abroad, to return only in 1850. As Minister of Education and Religious Affairs from 1867 on, he introduced the compulsory elementary education, and pushed through Jewish emancipation. His novels reflect his consuming sense of social responsibility: powerful works of uncompromising social criticism, their aim was to warn the ruling classes of the potential social explosion, and of the need for them to mend their ways." Varga (1993), 257. See also Varga, (1980–1981, 1983, 1993), Fenyő (1997, 2003), Gángó (1999, 2006), Bérenger and Kecskeméti (2005, 2008), Kecskeméti (1989, 2008).

¹⁹ Aurél Dessewffy (1887), 21.

²⁰ Aurél Dessewffy (1887), 32.

Counties and central government were equally absent from Széchenyi's idea of centralization. However, this conception, in Dessewffy's view, was far less dangerous than the radicalism, which structured into a system the pressures from below. It recognized no legitimate supreme power, since—intentionally or unintentionally—it was directed against it. In Dessewffy's opinion, the radicalism to which Kossuth did not adhere openly but which shaped obviously the positions of *Pesti Hírlap* transgressed constitutionality and undermined it. He claimed that the Hungarian political scene was no longer divided between the advocates and the opponents of reforms but between radicals and reformists—those who wished to modernize despite the constitution and those who wished to do so in the spirit of the constitution.²¹ In his series of articles commenting upon the *Kelet népe* polemics, Aurél Dessewffy only adumbrated this thesis, but in his polemics with the *Pesti Hírlap*, he put it expressly into words.

Speaking of the debate among the liberals, Aurél Dessewffy claimed that the major task at hand was actually related to their Hungarian nationality:

What worries me a bit is the jealousy shown by some of my respectable countrymen now to the west, now to the north. As for the former, a government that makes concessions to the Hungarian language year by year, yet cherishes in its heart of hearts the idea to turn them into Germans is just as senseless as is a person who wants to jump over a ditch but digs it deeper and wider every day. Let us therefore banish this thought from our heart. As for the latter, I offer a modest comment for consideration to my compatriots: The Slav people and another northern race [the Poles and the Russians] have been fighting bloody battles for centuries, separated by the deepest hatred, difference in religious faith, and memories of centuries-old vengeance. This explains why several thinkers in Europe do not regard Slavism as an ally of the northern torrent, but rather see it as an enormous obstacle, a moral power rather than a political combination. This idea may be mistaken. Yet, wouldn't it be necessary—in order to forestall great uproar about the subject and the identification of people who have nothing to do with each other—to look closely at the matter and examine whether the movement we are witnessing is partly analogous to what we Hungarians are doing about our nationality and partly a reaction to what the statements of some officious persons claim to be our intention of doing?²²

As is seen, Dessewffy did not consider either Germanization or Pan-Slavism a real danger. Germanization was refuted by the good will of

²¹ Aurél Dessewffy (1887), 24–48, esp. 42–46.

²² Aurél Dessewffy (1887), 39–40, cf. 49–52, 68–72.

the government and its concessions in support of the Hungarian language, while the fear of Pan-Slavism rested on a false thesis, the undifferentiated concept of the Slavs that fused various Slav nations such as the Catholic Poles and Eastern Orthodox Russians into a non-existing whole. The nationality movements in Hungary, the young leader of *conservative reformists* noted, were partly the copies of the Hungarian national movement and partly the reaction to some extremism. In the knowledge of the imperial conception of integration, one must regard his argument about Germanization a limited response to oversimplifications. His comment on the Pan-Slavic danger ignored the threat of the expansion of the Russian Empire.

The young conservative aristocrat ended his comments on the internal dispute of the liberals—continued in the liberal-conservative polemic—with the outlining of the model to be adopted:

The development, prosperity, and national consolidation of Hungary will never weaken the cohesion of the entire Monarchy; ... the consummation of our nationality is not a plot against the government but contrarily, it is the consolidation of national individuality that may be a new and enormous element in the whole of the common forces. There should be no word about the heterogeneity of the monarchy, for if our constitution is duly observed, the structure of the other lands is no business of ours ... We should not charge the government with wishing to turn us into Germans, as it is not true, nor that it is hostile to popular education, which is an unfair accusation ... There should not be agitation that would defeat its purpose ... The possessors of rights should be warned of the changed circumstances, the call of the times, and of political righteousness; and the peasants should be reminded of the many things achieved for their benefit within a few years, which proves good will much better than words. We should concentrate on three or four main subjects that should be the goals of the near future and devote all our intellectual strength to deliberate these. We should reiterate and prove with deeds to those of other mother tongues that we have do not wish to denationalize them, instead, they would have a share of the blessings of the constitution thanks to the Magyarized administrative and political life.²³

While in the memorandum Dessewffy counseled the government, in his series of articles commenting upon the *Kelet népe* debate he addressed his proposals to the key personalities of the Hungarian political scene, the reformists deluded by the radicals. He mainly explained how the constitutional innovators should *not* behave toward the imperial government, the constitutionality, and the other nationalities. The expedient strategy was identical with that of the memorandum, but the genre being different, the

²³ Aurél Dessewffy (1887), 46–48.

theses put forth recurred in the series of articles from a different angle. The initiative role of the government was paralleled with a set of “what not to do,” while the decisive weight of the radicals in the counties was now approached from the law enforcing function of the central power, and the theoretical need of subjection to the empire was rhymed by aulic (royalist) loyalty to the imperial government (the king and the imperial government still being identified together even after the trumped-up trials of high treason). Nonetheless, it was all the same thing inside or out.

In October and November of 1841, Aurél Dessewffy expounded his views and arguments elicited by the debate within the liberal camp directly in opposition to Kossuth. The press polemics between him and Lajos Kossuth was the first press battle between the liberal and conservative camps, the prelude to a long row of debates.

Since August 1841, the conservative counterpart to *Pesti Hírlap* was *Világ*, which was originally a liberal literary paper of small circulation. On August 18, the owner Márton Borsos asked Ignác Jablanczy to edit the paper, who in the very first issue in his edition attacked *Pesti Hírlap* and its editors with unusual acrimony. Towards the end of summer and in early autumn, the articles and reports by county correspondents, and even the news from abroad, gradually outlined a position against the organ of the liberal reformers.²⁴ It was already surmised, and from mid-October known positively, that the change of the paper’s outlook was not due to the new editor but rather to the councilor of the Consilium Locumtenentiale, Count Aurél Dessewffy, who signed his writings with the initials X. Y. Z. Jablanczy placed on the editorial board József Andrássy, a *Consilium Locumtenentiale* councilor, Ferenc Császár and Sándor Luka, assessors of the commercial court, and János Zarka, a judge of the royal court. The liaison between the paper and the government organs was deputy palatine József Ürményi. Dessewffy’s joining of the editorial board won over Jenő Zichy,

²⁴ Jablanczy’s articles and almost all anonymous writings in *Világ* were ascribed by the reviewer of *Erdélyi Híradó* to Aurél Dessewffy. This was the view of Andics (1975), 128–129, as well. Originally without title or author: [Aurél Dessewffy], “A tulajdonos bemutatja az új szerkesztőt, Jablanczy Ignác beköszöntője [The owner presents the new editor, II’s opening announcement],” *Világ*[V], Aug. 18, 1841; idem, “Inquisitio,” V, Aug. 25, 1841; Jablanczy (1842, vols. 9–10). Cf. “Magyarhoni dolgok [Matters in Hungary],” *Erdélyi Híradó*[EH], Nov. 22, 1841; EH, Nov. 30, Dec. 3 and 17, 1841; [Méhes Sámuel], “Bizalmas súgás a ‘Világhoz’ [Confidential whisper to *Világ*],” EH, Dec. 17, 1841. See also, Aurél Dessewffy, “Letter to the EH editors,” EH, Dec. 21, 1841; Aurél Dessewffy, “To Erdélyi Híradó,” V, Nov. 27, 1841; Aurél Dessewffy, “Advice to Erdélyi Híradó,” V, Dec. 4, 1841.

Ödön Zichy, János Czindery, György Apponyi, and Albert Sztáray to the paper, and with Vince Szentiványi, the secretary of the governor-general's office, they became the contributors to *Világ*.²⁵ Dessewffy also tried to win Catholic priest and historian Mihály Horváth and later on historian of literature Ferenc Toldy for the staff—first of all on topics of history and education—but clearly failed in the former and probably also in the latter case.²⁶ He wrote to Catholic bishop József Lonovics on September 16, stating, “we are just beginners now, but from next year on we expect to receive severe criticism from the public.”²⁷ On December 21, he informed Mihály Horváth that “So far, the paper has not come up to the ideal I have set for myself. However, I find that it is improving day by day. The philosophy of the paper is development—on a constitutional basis—and thus it ignores everything that smells of revolution. That this trend will never turn into retrogression is guaranteed by my contribution.”²⁸

Kossuth first responded to attacks by *Világ* in mid-October; he tagged it as a mouthpiece of the feudal opposition, condemned its indulgence in offensive personal remarks, and suggested—in the interest of objective discussion—that the influential person setting the course of the paper should express his separation from this offensive tone and step out of anonymity.²⁹ In response, Dessewffy expressed solidarity with Jablanczy in an open letter, but he condemned personalities and named himself.³⁰ After that, the polemics grew in vehemence.

Despite all evidence to the contrary, Aurél Dessewffy declared in an article on November 6 that the Fejér county resolution concerning the rejection of the taxation of the nobility took place without external influence or pressure. This resolution, was an important element of the sharing of burdens. The following paragraph is a summary of Aurél Dessewffy's conclusion:

The resolution of the Fejér county nobles does not mean the denial of the taxation of the nobility in theory, but it is a protest against being

²⁵ Varga (1983), 113–114.

²⁶ Undated letter, Aurél Dessewffy to Mihály Horváth, Pest, Dec. 21, 1841, OSZKK Lr; Aurél Dessewffy to Ferenc Toldy, MTAKK, Magyar irodalmi levelezés [Hungarian literary correspondence], 2r. 4. Cf. Pajkossy (2002a) and Dávidházi (2004).

²⁷ Aurél Dessewffy to József Lonovics, Buda, Sept. 16, 1841, OSZKK Lr.

²⁸ Aurél Dessewffy to Mihály Horváth, Pest, Dec. 21, 1841, OSZKK Lr.

²⁹ [Lajos Kossuth], “Polémia [Polemic],” *Pesti Hírlap* [PH], Oct. 16, 1841.

³⁰ X. Y. Z. [Aurél Dessewffy], “Nyílt levél [Open letter],” *V*, Oct. 30, 1841. Cf. [Ignác Jablanczy], “Polémia I–II,” *V*, Oct. 23 and 27, 1841; [Ignác Jablanczy], “Népszerűség [Popularity],” *V*, Oct. 27, 1841.

pressed to do so from below. The party of the *Pesti Hírlap* is to be held responsible for this pressure and Fejér county is worthy of praise. It is a precondition for the success of the reform, to do away with this radical pressure, for—just like in England—the political divide is not between conservatives and progressives, but between sober reformists and subverters. In England, the Whig and the Tory are united in facing the radicals, and now in Hungary the legitimate actors of the political arena—be they conservatives or liberals—are confronted by the unlawful, offensive, and aggressive radicals, the men of rank-and-file. The moment the terrorizing pressure ceases the lawful reform can ensue, to be brought into effect by those interested in and entitled to be dealing with it. The radicals, the camp around *Pesti Hírlap*, are agitating for the compulsory redemption of the peasants' feudal obligations with the slogan of "free land" but they fail to ensure the compensation of the landowners and arouse the demand for the distribution of land for free. The radical suggestion that the nobility also pay house and war taxes is not at all unselfish, as it goes together with the reconsideration of the political weight of the nobility in the counties—in inverse proportion with their culture and wealth—and the simultaneous increase in the county burdens. All these (together with the radical agitation for the confiscation of church estates, the abolition of the landlord's slaughtering right, and the unconditional erasure of *aviticitas*) are claims of the politically weightless forces without wealth and culture. *Pesti Hírlap* is their mouthpiece. Thus, the obstacle in the way of the reform is the agitation by *Pesti Hírlap*. The paper has shed its role as the organ of the constitutional opposition; underlying its slogans is not only irresponsibility and political diletantism, but also selfish interest and crude force that must be ousted from the constitutional public life.³¹

In November, Kossuth replied to Dessewffy in a two-part article. He recognized the tactic of dividing the opposition in the argumentation of his debater. If *Pesti Hírlap* disavowed the branded oppositionists in Fejér county, then the liberal camp was successfully split up, but if it accepted them, it had to bear responsibility for every word of theirs—this is how Kossuth epitomized Dessewffy's method. Whereas the trends represented by *Pesti Hírlap* did not coalesce into a militaristically organized party, the cohering force of principles went very well together with autonomous and dissenting opinions. The compulsion to choose between division and stigmatization had to be repudiated.

³¹ X. Y. Z. [Aurél Dessewffy], "Megyék állása [The situation of the counties]," *V*, Nov. 6, 1841.

The division of the public life into radicals and reformists was arbitrary. It was arbitrary, argued Kossuth, as it was the uncritical borrowing of Lord Stanley's self-justifying thesis. Stanley explained his volte-face from liberal to conservative by relativizing the traditional poles of British politics. It was also arbitrary because Aurél Dessewffy (using the dividing tactic and suspecting the liberal reformers of conspiracy) ascribed the core of the disputed issue—refusal of tax payment—to defiance and found himself entangled in a self-contradiction. Kossuth wrote:

Do those who have never been accepted by the people as their representatives want to extract the approval of their propositions detrimental to the constitution and the proprietary law in the impertinent tone of threats?" ... That means that the levy of the domestic tax (for its apology is what all this boils down to) is a proposition injurious to the constitution and proprietary law, with which, however, Count [Dessewffy] agrees.³²

There was thus a contradiction between the rejection of the reform and the accentuation of the reformist intention. Dessewffy's contrasting of the "propertied" and the "propertyless," and the "illegitimacy" of the efforts of the liberal reformers were aimed to set the aristocracy (and the wealthy landowning nobility) against the lower nobility, on the one hand, and the government against the nation, on the other—as the editor of *Pesti Hírlap* interpreted his polemicist's position.³³

Dessewffy answered Kossuth's article on November 24 with a writing entitled "Statement and vindication." He charged that *Pesti Hírlap* expropriated the concept of the nation whereas it only represented a group of the county officers, intellectuals, and youth, that is, groups who have nothing to lose when the issue is some sacrifice by the nobility, for the domestic tax would be paid by affluent landowners, and the county officials and intellectuals would live off of it. It is not prudent, he added as a piece of advice to his adversary, for those to urge for reforms who have nothing to lose. It deflates the reform morally, and fuels the opposition to reform who may use the poor nobility against it at any time, as they have no interest in the reform. To illustrate the question how the necessary transformation should be carried out, Dessewffy adduced two historical examples, England and France. In the English evolution, the prominent

³² Domestic tax: a tax collected by the county for its own expenses.

³³ [Lajos Kossuth], "Viszonzás [Reply]," pts. 1 and 2, *PH*, Nov. 13 and 17, 1841. See also, Aurél Dessewffy, "'Adj istenére' 'Fogadj isten' Puky Miklóstól ['Tit' from Miklós Puky for 'tat']," *PH*, Nov. 17, 1841; László Mezősy, "Vidéki levéltárca [Letter from the countryside]," *PH*, Nov. 27, 1841. On the political role of Lord Edward Geoffrey, Earl of Derby, from 1851: György (1874), 149, and Abbott (1977), 29.

features are continuity and balance, which has been ensured by the role of the large estates. In Dessewffy's view, the large landed property is the power that has protected the country from extremes, set it on an even course of development, and warded off the dictatorship of masses and individuals. The opposing example is France. The well-known imbalance of French development finds its cause in the lack of large estates. Changes must be carried out in Hungary in such a manner that the large estates ("lying estate," landed property) be the equalizer of development.

He claimed that the party of *Pesti Hírlap* had transgressed the boundary within which the constitutional opposition could move, for its members refused to accept or attack the property relations and would arbitrarily remove legislation from the competence of the sovereign and diet and assign it to the counties. This was a very dangerous tendency, for the government's trust in the nation is in inverse proportion to the influence of the "extremist party." Therefore, *Pesti Hírlap* paves the way—unknowingly and unwittingly—for the enemies of the nation, and does so at a time when the government is willing to yield to reforms.³⁴

Jablanczy's statement was more lapidary. He opined that those obsessed with the delusions were violating the constitutional rights and exposing the Hungarians—embodied by the aristocracy and allied to the government—to external and internal foes (the nationalities and Jews).³⁵

On November 27, Aurél Dessewffy wrote a new article for *Világ* called "County authority and legislative rights in penal procedure," apropos a resolution of Pest county to include elements of the public in the judicial proceeding. It was not the reforms he objected to, though they were ill-considered, but the shifting of the reforms from the authority of the legislature to the jurisdiction of the counties, which was arbitrary and unconstitutional. Hungary was not a federal republic but a constitutional kingdom in which legislation was the joint task of the monarch and the diet. By creating statutes in their own right, the counties unconstitutionally ignored the competent forums and created dangerous precedents for the neglect of lawfulness.³⁶

Dessewffy's position had more than theoretical significance, for the *Consilium Locumtenentiale* annulled in rescripts all the reform initiatives

³⁴ Aurél Dessewffy, "Nyilatkozat és igazolás [Statement and vindication]," *V*, Nov. 24, 1841.

³⁵ Jablanczy (1842), 25.

³⁶ X. Y. Z. [Aurél Dessewffy], "Megyei hatóság és törvényhozási jogok fenyítő eljárás körében [County authority and legislative rights in criminal procedure]," *V*, Nov. 27, 1841.

that were against a positive law. It invalidated the resolution of Pest county and narrowed down the jurisdiction of the counties. Dessewffy was a councilor of the *Consilium* and member of the dietal committee for the elaboration of the penal code, therefore his opinion was not that of a private person alone.

On the day of the appearance of Dessewffy's new article in *Világ, Pesti Hírlap* carried an anonymous polemic writing by one of the most outstanding Hungarian liberal political writers, Károly Nagy, entitled "A little antidote." The title responded to Dessewffy's series of articles interpreting the *Kelet népe* debate, in which he claimed that the "radical" agitation by *Pesti Hírlap* needed an antidote, a counteraction to an antidote. Károly Nagy contested that it is the task or rather vocation of the aristocracy and the wealthy landowning nobility to initiate the necessary reforms. Since the aristocracy has failed to fulfill its role, *Pesti Hírlap* must champion this cause. He argued that obsolescence is inherent in the nature of the aristocracy, but the liberalism of its outstanding members has proven that other ideas may strike root, as well. The liberals, Károly Nagy concluded, were counting on the reformist activity of persons bearing historic names.³⁷

Kossuth contributed to the polemic his articles "Landed aristocracy" and "Foreign example" (December 1 and 8). He demonstrated that Dessewffy had set the propertied and propertyless nobility against each other, reserving the right of political involvement for the aristocracy and the large landowners. Only wealth and culture can ensure the independent sense of justice that serves the interests of the nation and meets the requirements of constitutional politics, Dessewffy opined. Kossuth countered stressing that every nobleman was coequal, which was exactly what allowed for the elevation of commoners into the nation, for the "interest of unification," for the multiplication and strengthening of freedom instead of its disintegration, and for the cohesion of political community. The motive force behind transformation—he thought at that time—should be the middle "estate" or middle class in Hungary, whom he identified with the nobility of medium estates. Naturally, the aristocracy could participate—not by virtue of birth or rank but by personal merit. Kossuth saw the landed aristocracy is a kind of oligarchy, which explains its parasitic

³⁷ [Károly Nagy], "Egy kis antidotum [A little antidote]," *PH*, Nov. 27, 1841. The author of the article was identified by János Varga. Károly Nagy (b. 1797, d. 1868) was an "astronomer, publicist. Studied in Vienna; upon his return, managed the finances of several large estates. A utopian socialist and dedicated democrat, he wrote profusely on scientific and political subjects." Varga (1993), 265.

role. By this he reversed Aurél Dessewffy's argument about the French course, for Dessewffy argued that transformation reproduces the earlier hierarchic social relations at a lower level, with the moneyed class replacing the aristocracy, and the existence of the latter being wholly based on possession, and not merit.

The middle class nobility are involved in municipal life, Kossuth wrote, and its job is unification, not separation. The social balancing role of the landowning aristocracy is false in general, and false in England, in particular. The English aristocracy, he declared, has not separated itself from the people, it has taken part in free competition and has not ganged up in one political party, as the Tory party is not identical with the English aristocracy. The potential of English development lies in the individual possibilities of enterprising, the effect of which is obvious in bringing about prosperity. This development, however, was not devoid of terrible shocks, Kossuth pointed, especially when the large estates had the preponderance. He claimed that the French development showed considerable achievement despite its internal crises and disasters, the crises having been caused by the oligarchy. From among foreign examples, Kossuth also chose England as worthy of following with the remark that its development was the epitome, not of balanced order and freedom brought by the aristocracy and the large estate, but just its opposite.³⁸

Aurél Dessewffy answered the liberal's thoughts—at least formally—on December 22. He hardly responded to his polemicist's arguments, but rested content with issuing some advice. He warned the county officers against impatiently tabling reformist motions, since the concessions depended mainly on the good will of the landowning aristocracy, and thus they should not be threatened but provided with guarantees that their well-being was not in jeopardy. He claimed excesses and mistakes were pounced upon by those who wanted to use the propertyless nobility against the reforms.³⁹

The dispute ended with that, and only some partial elements reverberated still in the two papers. The struggle shifted partly to other venues: the meetings of the committee on the penal code where the conservative and

³⁸ [Lajos Kossuth], "Birtokarisztokrácia. Példa külföldről [Landed aristocracy. A foreign example]," *PH*, Dec. 1 and 8, 1841. On the real and idealistic elements of the myth of continuous English development, compare Butterfield (1973) and Kirk (1995). See also, Kecskeméti (1989).

³⁹ X. Y. Z. [Aurél Dessewffy], "Kiegészítő észrevételek [Supplementary thoughts]," *V*, Dec. 22, 1841.

liberal positions crystallized around Aurél Dessewffy and Ferenc Deák, respectively, and the meetings of Pest County where the polemic of Aurél Dessewffy and Kossuth continued. Yet the main reason for terminating the press polemic was different: Aurél Dessewffy probably found that the rescripts of the governor-general's office satisfactorily counterbalanced the effects of *Pesti Hírlap* and first of all the counties' reform initiatives. With his imminent appointment to the Hungarian chancellor's post, there was no longer need for his incessant press presence—at least not as intensely as before. The golden opportunity for the separation of the “middle-of-the-roaders” from the mainstream of the liberal reformists—the *Kelet népe* debate—had passed. Aurél Dessewffy's account on January 1, 1842 was a retrospective and moderate summary of the situation. His letters reveal that he had new plans for the next issues of *Világ*.⁴⁰ His unexpected death—of “nervous fever,” to cite the contemporaneous diagnosis—on February 9 forestalled them.

There were several obituaries including one by Kossuth out of respect for an intellectual partner; he claimed his death was a great loss.⁴¹ In the days after Aurél Dessewffy's death, some anti-centralization articles against the *Consilium*'s rescripts were published by *Pesti Hírlap*. Their message was that the lack of liberty in the bureaucratic system, designed to replace the system of self-government, would cause servility and anarchy, and also the reign of the secret police and the alienation of government from society.⁴²

The press debate between Aurél Dessewffy and Lajos Kossuth, the first liberal-conservative press dispute, did not achieve the presumable goal of the late leader of the *cautious progressives*, the turning of most of

⁴⁰ X. Y. Z. [Aurél Dessewffy], “Visszapillantás 1841-re [Looking back on 1841],” *V*, Jan. 1, 1842.

⁴¹ [Lajos Kossuth], “Halálozás [Death],” *PH*, Feb. 10, 1842; [Lajos Kossuth], “Végrendelet, Nekrológ [Testament, obituary],” *V*, Feb. 12, 1842; [Andrássy József], “Nyilatkozat [Statement],” *V*, Feb. 19, 1842. The obituary in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* of Augsburg was written—as Szőgyény's memoirs reveal—by Antal Szécsen (Szőgyény 1903), 112–114, its Hungarian translation appears in *Világ*, Feb. 23, 1842. Cf. Emil Dessewffy (1843a) and Aurél Dessewffy (1843).

⁴² Ferenc Pulszky, “Centralizáció. Általános nézetek, Centralizáció okai, A centralizáció következményei. Még egy pár szó [Centralization: General ideas, reasons of centralization, consequences of centralization, and a few more words],” pts. 1–4, *PH*, Feb. 10, 13, 17, and 20, 1842; [Lajos Kossuth], “Adalék a centralizációrólí fejtegetésekhez [Addenda to the argumentation on centralization],” *PH*, Feb. 20, 1842; [Lajos Kossuth], “Eszmetársulat [Association of ideas],” *PH*, Mar. 31, 1842. My attention was drawn to Pulszky's series of articles by János Varga.

the landed nobility against the poor and the “radical” intellectuals. We know that József Eötvös, to whom Dessewffy dedicated his book, could not be won over. Yet Dessewffy’s argumentation was not quite ineffective. The number of subscribers to *Világ* increased five-fold in the later phase of the polemic, and the program of *cautious progress* had been announced and the attention of the Hungarian public had been aroused in addition to that of the government.⁴³ It is also true that the genres of the memorandum and the press articles were very different, and they were addressed to different audiences. In the press debate, Aurél Dessewffy could not ignore the existence of a Hungarian political public. He tried to expose the “subverters” of the pro-reform aristocrats and wealthy landowners. In his reply to Kossuth, he warned against impatience which he thought threatened the goal of innovation, since the propertyless nobles—whom he summarily branded and characterized with dislike—could be played off against the wealthy landowners at any time.

Dessewffy’s role in the press debate was “to expose” the radicals, but at the peak of the polemic he changed tactics and assumed the role of adviser to the friends of reform. Still, his earlier “exposing” role was again replayed in it but in a milder and more moderate tone. Though in theory he embraced the cause of reformation, he also expropriated it. He repelled the initiatives of the reformist opposition with constitutional arguments, and named the repression of the “radicals” as the prerequisite of modernization.⁴⁴

During the dispute, Aurél Dessewffy tried to split the liberal camp, therefore he wished to win over some liberals. The press discussion, how-

⁴³ Varga (1983), 114.

⁴⁴ On the background to Aurél Dessewffy’s journalistic role: Staatsarchiv, Vienna, Kabinettssachiv, Staatskonferenzakten, a. 1841. 259. 519. József Havas to Alajos Mednyánszky, Pest, Nov. 20 and 28, 1841, MOL, RL, Archivum Palatinale, Palatinus Archiducis Josephi, Archivum secretum Palatinale archiducis Josephi, Praesidialia, 1841. 128; Alajos Mednyánszky to Palatine Joseph, Buda, Dec. 7, 1841, *ibid.*; Letter [draft], Palatine Joseph to Mednyánszky Alajos, Buda, Dec. 9, 1841, *ibid.* Aurél Dessewffy and his brother Emil both published in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* of Augsburg, as well: Graf Emil Dessewffy, “Ungarn und der Reichstag I–II., Ungarn und Croatien,” *Allgemeine Zeitung*[AZ], May 21, 22, and June 18, 1840; [Graf Aurél Dessewffy], “Ungarn, im Junius, London, 19 Sept., Paris, 3 Nov.” *AZ*, July 8, Sept. 29, and Nov. 9, 1840; Graf Emil Dessewffy, “Pesth, 10 Feb. Die Industrie und Ihre Protectoren,” *AZ*, Feb. 26, 1845. The articles were pointed out to me by Gábor Pajkossy, who also identified the anonymous writings during the processing of the Hungary-related material in the archive of the *Allgemeine Zeitung*: Deutsches Literaturarchiv, Marbach am Neckar, Cotta – Archiv. Stiftung der *Stuttgarter Zeitung*.

ever, put him on an equal footing with those whom he did not regard as polemical partners and tried to oust from political life. By the rules of the journalistic game, they were—willy-nilly—partners. As a result, his public roles had a peculiar “double bind.” By trying to offset the weight of *Pesti Hírlap* through *Világ*, he had implicitly accepted the fact that the politically active public was wider than the circle he had drawn. Verbally, however, he kept attacking this larger public. While for his adversaries the battlefield was designated by the censured *Pesti Hírlap* and the county assembly meetings, for him these were only (or mainly) tools to influence the informal channels behind the public scene, first of all to win over the imperial decision making center. The influence he wished to exert upon the imperial government was revealed by his above-mentioned memorandum.

The decisive role of the public is incompatible with its imposed limitation. The member of a political public either takes publicity seriously, and if he does, he cannot aim to eliminate it by having it autocratically banned with force as an actor above the political entity. The leader of the *cautious progressives* acted like a participant in a press debate, whereas he was a state councilor who was above the dispute. He let it be felt from time to time that he was entitled to rule, albeit he had entered the dispute as a reasoner. This confusion of roles was derived from the peculiarities of his vision, from the need to modernize the system of privileges.

Order-Based Modernity

The conception of the leader of the progressive conservatives, Aurél Dessewffy, incorporated both the safeguard of the aristocratic constitution by the traditional Hungarian gravaminalists and the support of the court by the aulic side. Only, he protected the constitution against the liberal reformers and not the court, while he urged the government to initiate reforms, first of all to push back the reformist opposition, and also to introduce modernizing reforms. The implicit goal was the enhancement of the weight of Hungary within the empire and the informal influencing of the imperial decision making. In Hungary, his aim was to modernize the system of institutions. From the letter to his mother one gleans traditional conservatism, but in his press articles he set the constitutional reform against radicalism, which subverts the foundations of constitutionality.

What did the young and talented leader of “conservative reformists” regard as to be preserved, discarded, and modernized? How did his position differ from Károly De La Motte’s position: “What good is liberty to

me if all people are free?"⁴⁵ Aurél Dessewffy's strategy applied to the meetings of the committee assigned to work out the first Hungarian criminal code was a noteworthy example of the cautiously progressive variant of balancing between modernization and conservation. In the light of its conclusions, we shall compare the philosophy behind the memorandum and his public utterances to outline his basic ideology.

At the meetings (1841–43) of the committee of criminal law delegated by the 1839/40 diet, the two antagonistic positions were the liberals' proposal for trial by jury and the conservatives' modernizing propositions. The speakers of the two positions were Ferenc Deák and Aurél Dessewffy (and Ede Zsedényi after the latter's death).⁴⁶

The conservative strategy was designed and put through by Aurél Dessewffy. What he wished to conserve was the sovereign's personal judicial power (derived from the grace of God and devolved upon dignitaries, then bodies), and through that the legal order of the state, which arranged hierarchically from above preserves and guarantees the system of privileges. The liberal challenge posed by the minority members of the reformist opposition led by Deák wished to introduce trial by jury to open the road to a modern judiciary system. They opined that juries superseded the hierarchic stratification of society in matters of jurisdiction, and they were important schools of self-government and social equalization, as guarantees of equality before the law. Trial by jury was the instrument of a democratic political community's self-purification and self-organization, which is incompatible with absolute state power or the aristocratic legal arrangement.

Dessewffy (and later Ede Zsedényi) firmly discarded the method of trial by jury in the name of the conservatives in a sophisticated way. The rejection was categorical, but went together with several concessions. Aurél Dessewffy accepted, and made his fellow conservatives also accept the principle of equality before the law, the abolition of humiliating and ignominious punishment (not being averse to abolishing corporeal, and even capital punishment), and open court (preserving the possibility of in camera trials) and oral procedure at lower courts (but only at lower courts) instead of the written procedure employed so far. All this—that he had borrowed filtered from the liberal propositions—would have been impor-

⁴⁵ Cited in Kossuth (1948–1989), 3: 719.

⁴⁶ The projects elaborated by the committee on criminal law delegated by the 1839/40 diet were published in 1843 and generated a wealth of pamphlets. My discussion of the issue is based on the study highlighting the committee's work, the arguments adduced, and the conclusions they arrived at. See, Varga (1980a).

tant and useful innovations, but they did not touch on the source of justice, its legitimacy. He shunned the question in whose name the judge dispensed justice, who had endowed him with the power of administering justice; the above concessions and modernization (which remained in plan) were compatible with the sovereign's power by divine grace.

Dessewffy went further and instead of a jury, he proposed the introduction of the court of arbitration, which seemingly implied the approval of a judiciary practice involving those without privileges—at least in part—and would have partly asserted the principle of equality before the law. Appearance, however, disguised the essence. In Dessewffy's proposition, the magistrates (the non-professional elected judges also representing the unprivileged strata) would only have had a greater role in preparing, investigating, and instituting a lawsuit, with limited authority, as well. The deliberation of the judgement was to have been the competence of the salaried judges, graduates of law, who were appointed from above or elected by members of the aristocratic institutions. The source of justice, the foundation of the legal order, was untouched and untouchable, thus there were no guarantees for equality before the law. Individually some of the unprivileged who had property and an autonomous sense of judgement could make their way to the body of magistrates. That was all the principle of equality before the law could guarantee, but the whole judiciary system remained arranged and controlled from above.⁴⁷

Aurél Dessewffy's proposal for a streamlined criminal law contained true innovation and clever and deluding concessions while in the basic principle it was wholly conservative. What makes it peculiar is that both the innovations and the concessions served conservatism. That also determined Dessewffy's roles in other fields and his underlying ideological assumptions. The cautiously progressive project of the penal law committee never reaching the stage of enactment is a typical example of the strategy of conservative reformists and epitomizes Aurél Dessewffy's views on constitutionality and the foundations of the state organization and the criteria of social mobility.

In his article on the freedom of the press Dessewffy argued that the press must be regulated preventively or repressively, because retrospective regulation—the practice of libel suits—makes the criteria of publication far more incalculable than censorship, hence it is more advantageous

⁴⁷ Varga (1980a), 17–41, 55–75. Cf. László Czindery, "Észrevételek az országgyűlés elibe terjesztett büntetőtörvénykönyvjavaslat iránt [Comments on the proposed criminal code put before the diet]," *V*, Mar. 23, 27, 30, Apr. 3, 10, 17, 1844.

for the writers to have correct preliminary regulation, which makes clear what may and may not be published. Therefore, he concluded, censorship is in the interest of the writers. The ground for choosing between relative solutions is a sense of security. The exclusion of the absolute solution calls for choosing from among relative variants, which—Dessewffy suggested—depends on the inclination toward security. This position also generated strong aversion and thoughtful arguments (concerning the freedom of the press) from his father, József Dessewffy.⁴⁸

Another manifestation of the core of his ideology is his speech he delivered in the upper house at the 1839/40 diet about the encroachment on free speech and the lawfulness of the trials of high treason. He refused to condemn the unlawful trials with the following train of argument: no government can be spared of the moment when it is forced to use pressure, as situations requiring retaliation cannot be precluded in theory. If a government condemns repression, it denounces itself and makes retaliation theoretically impossible. Additionally, if the government intervenes in the judiciary system (as the proposal urges it to do), it ignores juridical autonomy and the demand for the separation of powers. Besides, the trials were formally impeccable, therefore there was no legal ground for subsequently annulling them. Thus, the solution he implicitly suggested—and naturally arrived at in Vienna—was the exercise of the prerogative of pardoning.⁴⁹

It is peculiar to the argumentation that the speaker paired the inevitability of the coercive regulatory function of power with its legality being beyond question. He deducted the procedures to be accepted and those to be eschewed from these two connected theses. This, however, was based on two false postulates. Firstly, he declared the formally deeply objectionable trials legally impeccable. Secondly, he charged that it would violate juridical autonomy to allow the legislative power to supervise a judicial ruling. Both statements are weak because the judges were appointed and influenced by the executive power, therefore they were not independent of the government, but only of the diet.

In his journalistic output, Aurél Dessewffy recurrently addressed himself to the issue of the separation of powers.⁵⁰ Seemingly, he only subor-

⁴⁸ Aurél Dessewffy (1887), 343–349.

⁴⁹ Aurél Dessewffy (1887), 218–226, 231–233, 269–276.

⁵⁰ X. Y. Z. [Aurél Dessewffy], “Törvényhozás és megyei hatóság viszonyai [Relations of legislature and county authority],” *V*, Sept. 8, 1841; idem, “Vidékiek megyei gyűléseken [Provincial deputies at county meetings],” *V*, Nov. 3, 1841; idem, “Megyei hatóság és törvényhozási jogok fenyítő eljárás körében [County authority and legislative rights in criminal procedure],” *V*, Nov. 27, 1841.

dinated the right of the counties to issue statutes to the legislation, but in actual fact he reinterpreted constitutionality in a narrow and normative manner, presenting the liquid aristocratic constitution based on customary law as if it covered a liberal state organization. This procedure was not unique in the age, and unlike the arguments of Wesselényi, Deák, and Kossuth, it meant the petrification of the hierarchy instead of the relaxation of the subordinations and superordinations. For him, the character and structure of constitutionality meant directly that the sovereign issued his decision after hearing—and not sidestepping—the Hungarian government organs. In his indirect interpretation, the unity of the legislation meant the rigid subordination of its elements: the lower house being subordinated to the upper, the upper directly to the monarch. The sovereign is a constitutional king who rules his subjects by divine grace. He is not only the symbol of the continuity of the state but his person is the source of constitutionality itself which, add we must, means the powerful restriction of personal rule by definition.

Aurél Dessewffy's arguments and interpretations led to the loss of the concreteness of a concrete issue, classification replaced definition; the content of the examined theme became incidental, its essence being overshadowed and eliminated by external criteria. The legality of a given state was identified with legality *per se*, rejecting any direct or indirect critique of the given legality by branding it as anarchy, ochlocracy, arbitrariness, and profiteering. His arguments and interpretations reveal the mentality of the future chief of Chancellery exercising authority over the society: the mechanism must work, its legality cannot be doubted, and any criticism is only a proposition by a subordinate. This attitude—the complete subordination of society to the state—determined Aurél Dessewffy's role. He descended to argue with a debater as if his position did not need justification, he questioned the constitutional legitimacy of his opponents' position and branded their intentions, and he derived the denial of necessary reforms from their effect. The image he entertained of his adversaries was the subverter, the trouble maker, while he saw himself as a committed politician. Both images were closely tied to his concepts of state and society, the latter being determined by the former.

In theory, Aurél Dessewffy did not preclude giving political rights to those outside the "bulwark of the constitution," but he made this conditional upon the individual's "maturation," upon becoming worthy of rising among the privileged. He envisioned social mobility after the model of individual ennoblement, as his conception of society rested on the axiom that the system of privileges was the only valid system due to human ine-

qualities. It follows from this that social mobility was made possible by the state. There was, and there could be, no society without the state, it was the state's task to organize the society. Who was mature enough and who was not to enter the political community was to be decided by the state, or more precisely, by the only state organ entitled to do so, the legislative power. The latter was, as is known, structured into a hierarchy. The most competent authority to decide on maturity was the sovereign (he alone had the right to ennoble or grant privileges). Inferior to him in granting rights were the aristocrats of the upper house, who had been appointed by the king or inherited their rank. The criterion of the autonomous faculty of judgement guaranteed by property was the least characteristic of the elected body of the legislature, the lower house deputies. Borrowing the criterion of political maturity from liberal sources, Aurél Dessewffy embedded personal power by the divine grace into the context of fidelity to the mutually identical authority of the sovereign and government not accountable to legislation; he made it clear that the involvement in the company of property owners—in the body politic, that is—meant loyalty to the absolutist state and the actual place in the system of privileges. The basis for the legitimacy of the state, that of social organization, was not only interrelated but stemmed from the same roots as both were determined by the monarch's personal authority and loyalty to him.

The cautious reformist also used the concept of property as he handled those of constitutionality and political maturity: seemingly he alluded to free property, just as he suggested the liberal state and middle-class society with the respective terms. In fact, however, he endowed the feudal property relations with modern attributes (similarly to the interpretation of the liberal state and society). He proceeded in a like manner in interpreting the concepts of nation, separation of powers, and the English development. The reasoning was not designed to ease but to conserve the bonds, the order by divine grace, and state domination over society.

Aurél Dessewffy already hinted in the memorandum that reform depended on power, and power could be accessed along the channels of informal politics. Reformism, he claimed, motivated the aspiration to obtain power: once a key position was reached, the reform could ensue—after all, the personality was the guarantee. First you had to align yourself with power in order to be able to influence it later. The content of the reform was tantamount to pacifying and modernizing innovations to be initiated by the government in order to repress the liberal reformers.

The program of the “conservative reformist” can be summed up as follows: For the sake of effective governance, the state frames of social or-

ganization—the forms of aristocratic constitutionality—have to be modernized. The difficult to manage, obsolete county system and the diet have to be rearranged and subordinated to the government. The system of privileges is not to be relaxed and abolished but modernized and conserved by incorporating up-to-date methods. The traditional platform of grievances in opposition to the government has to be given up, because constitutionality is threatened by the “radicals” and not by the government. The government has to be supported against the antagonist attacking the foundations of state and society, and the enemy camp must be split and forces must be joined with the good side. The repression of the liberal reformers depends on the firm, resolute, and flexible initiative of the government and the conservatives.

Aurél Dessewffy called himself a *neo-conservative*, *conservative reformist*, or *cautious progressive*. It is not the phrase “cautious progress” that is new in his conservatism as it was among the slogans of the Hungarian conservatives in the 1830s. Its contents, however, differed from the position of the diehard, status quo conservatives, for he admitted that innovation was necessary. Among the reforms he recommended, the ideas to modernize the given forms of the state organization were undoubtedly new. It was also a novelty that he tried to adjust the Hungarian conservative (aulic) tradition of supporting the court to the requirements of multi-level fighting with the liberal reformers. It was less of a novelty that he coupled it with the traditional defense of the *ancient* constitution.

By combining the protection of the constitution, support of the government, and the modernization of the state machinery and the system of privileges, Aurél Dessewffy laid the groundwork for a conservative offensive and a Conservative Party.

Separation vs. Unification (1842–1843)

Conservative Reform

“It is indeed the aristocracy whose influence I wish to preserve in the legislation, excluding all whom wise laws have excluded so far as they are not yet competent. The party of anarchy is fighting for the extension of franchise everywhere, for in this way they keep winning party supporters who obey their leaders blindly without having the ability of autonomous judgement; *they want more canvassers whom they can dominate*. Indeed, I do wish to keep the masses under guardianship, and, honestly speaking, to bridle them; but also to promote their material well-being by righteous government; to foster their mental improvement, and not to let them waste their time needed for earning a living by taking part in something they do not know, do not want, and are incapable of, namely, on co-governing ... *I wish to ensure their material well-being in every respect without the concerns of public life* ... We aristocrats have been invested by our constitutional status with the power to care for those whom the cruelty of fate assigned to dependence all over the world, i.e., *the poor, the common people, the masses*. It is our duty to be their guardians and protectors against *coercion, injustice, and excessive burden*, but also against the *lure of demagogues* who wish to use them for their injurious goals ... By aristocracy I mean landed estate and not only birth. Not only the prince, count, and baron belong here, but all true landowners who have interest in active conservation.”¹

In this excerpt Count Albert Sztáray puts forth plainly the necessary separation of landlord and peasant, master and servant, aristocracy and common people, derived from the organization (the only possible organization) of society, which can be alleviated by the paternalistic care of the aristocrats in the traditional argument of “protection of the peasants.”

Albert Sztáray was the shaper of conservative journalism. The view of Aurél Dessewffy’s uncle on the basic structure of society—published in the January 8, 1842 issue of *Világ*—was paired with views on the nobility’s exemption from taxation, and Hungary’s relation to the Habsburg Empire and the government.

I do wish to separate the war fund from the fund of the domestic tax, because I do not feel obliged (despite all the argumentation of *Pesti Hírlap*) to pay tax to the state ... In the union of states of the Austrian Empire, Hungary is a country that may perhaps pay less than the rest, but by virtue of its constitutionality it has come under the House of Austria on definite conditions. Hungary must be looked upon as free communities with

¹ Albert Sztáray, “Nagymihályi levelek [Letters from Nagymihály],” pt. 1, “Háziadó [Domestic tax],” *V*, Jan. 8, 1842. For a later antithesis to the quotation, see Erdei (1938), 211–212.

proprietary rights, which have concluded contracts of redemption of all their feudal obligations. These are just as unchangeable as is the quasi contract with Hungary. Let us recall what *Pesti Hírlap* has to say, and what happened in Borsod county where the majority has gone further than we can, and may, ever go, as they have declared to take their share of all public burden under the liberal (and delusive) condition that the ministers shall be responsible for the country's revenue management.

Though I have always been a supporter of the government, I have never been a flatterer; I have always voiced the demand that the government shall retain its constitutional power, authority, and strength unharmed, in other words, that it shall be a *real government*. To pay tax to the government although I am not under obligation to do so is an extreme to which neither me nor any pro-constitution supporter of the government are willing to go, and the intention of those who pronounce *willingness to do so is suspicious*. It is breach of order, on the one hand, and flattery to the government, on the other. But the latter will surely not let itself be deluded by such things.²

Albert Sztáray rejected the liberal reformers' proposals for the responsibility of the government and the equal sharing of burdens from the standpoint of the traditional defense of the constitution. Indirectly, he also argued against an oft-quoted accusation by the imperial government in the Cisleithanian press, namely, that Hungary did not share in the imperial burdens proportionately to its weight. In defense of the nobility's prerogatives Sztáray pointed out—drawing on the arguments of the traditional Hungarian conservative platform of grievances—that Hungary had a special place in the empire as it had a constitution, which could not be changed. He alluded to the example of communities that had redeemed themselves. His paternalist theses protecting the peasants, the *ancient constitution*, and the privileges were posited in support of the cautious progressives' proposition that called on the nobility to undertake the domestic tax, which was meant to cover the costs of county administration.

I do wish that compared to the proletarians and the landless nobles, the landowning aristocracy shall have decisive influence on issues of the sharing and determining of public expenditures, having the majority of votes; ... But upon those nobles who own no land any more I do not wish to impose more debt, for I do not understand why exactly this class should be doubly burdened. However, I would not question their right of vote at elections. *Pesti Hírlap* is right in suspecting some sort of *votum curiatum* in my plans; I myself had something of the sort in mind.³

Sztáray's proposition probably appeared fair, as it correlated the proportionate sharing of public expenditures with the having of rights. The

² Albert Sztáray, "Letters from Nagymihály, Domestic tax."

³ Albert Sztáray, "Letters from Nagymihály, Domestic tax."

landowning nobility should take on the burden of the domestic tax proposed to cover the expenses of the county administration, but parallel with that, they should have more rights than the landless nobles to decide how to spend these revenues. Kossuth explained the two positions in a later phase of the debate:

It is an essential difference in our opinions on this issue that the noble Count wishes to levy the entire domestic tax on the nobility excluding those living on peasant holdings (*sessions*), since he refuses to unite with the people, to give them political rights. We, on the other hand, want that the domestic tax be imposed in fair proportion on nobles and non-nobles alike, since it is our warmest wish—to cite Count Széchenyi, to elevate the people within the bulwark of the constitution, to turn the people into the nation, to unite with them in the body politic, and to give them political rights. The noble Count proposes that in budgetary and revenue handling matters everyone should have a say proportionately with his pay ... We the supporters of political equality think that wherever some qualification is required by the law concerning political rights, the possessors of legal qualifications must have equal rights; to stratify them by the penny would also entail the separating of a hyper-aristocracy within the aristocracy, the relegation of the legally qualified population of the country to a shadowy existence in rights and liberties, and to play all constitutional power to the hands of a few against the overwhelming majority. First, it is likely that the nobility will accept the smaller than the larger burden, that it will pay proportionately rather than pay *alone*; it is in the interest both of the country and its own pocket. Second, it is unlikely that instead of extending its political rights to others, the nobility will surrender these rights to a few oligarchs.⁴

Kossuth repeated the above arguments embedded in a larger context in his article of April 24, 1842. The concrete objection he responded to was that if the nobility contributed to the domestic tax, this could be used as a pretext to increase the war tax levied on the people. This anxiety among the liberal reformers was to be banished by changing the character of political life, by turning the counties into institutions of popular representation. This would be a guarantee for precluding abuse:

It is to be feared (some say) that the easing of the people's burdens would be an excuse for increasing the war tax, and after the second or third diet the people will pay as much war tax as they pay now into the two tax funds together ... We must acquire all possible guarantees that the nobility's sharing in the domestic tax will not be a pretext for increasing the war text. We do know a guarantee, the strongest one that human mind can probably design ... The ancient structure of our wonderful county municipalities should develop into a representative system, and the deputy should enter into the same relationship with the taxpayers as he is in now with those who pay the subsidies, and lo and behold, we have invented the guarantee the lack of which worries

⁴ [Lajos Kossuth], "Nehézségek [Difficulties]," *PH*, Apr. 17, 1842.

some here and gives ground for rejections to others there. We have declared many times that we wish to admit the people of Hunnia into the bulwark of our constitution, and therefore, like the past master of analysis, Bentham, who has not accepted any theory that did not harmonize with his basic criterion—“*the greatest happiness for the greatest number*”—we discard any idea that hinders rather than promotes this exalted goal ... Let us lift the people to us, let us accept the proposed qualification as binding for all ... Things would take on quite a different look, if the goal were not the elevation of the people into the nation by the proposed qualification, and the extension of the benefit of political rights to others, but, instead, if it were the decimation, the restriction of those who already have been qualified to have political rights by the constitution. This would turn the statute, which otherwise came close to reality or sober political thinking, into an oligarchic rule; the oligarchy includes all the seamy side of the aristocracy without having any of its sunny side.⁵

Albert Sztáray republished his former proposal for the nobility to assume the domestic tax with additions and comments in an April issue of *Világ*. He recommended that those who paid less than the set minimum should only have the fragment of a vote, while those who paid the minimum or more of the county's self-imposed tax should have one vote. The noblemen who had no landed property should be exempted from the tax, for they had to contribute to the war tax, the tax of the commoners from which the landowning nobility were and should continue to be exempted. In Sztáray's proposal landowning nobles would have votes in proportion to the tax paid, while the landless who would be exempt from tax would be demoted to the rank of the unprivileged, the common people, deprived of their rights, while the privileges of the landowners would increase.⁶ This plan was criticized by Kossuth, who claimed that it was not the extension but deprivation of rights and extension of privileges, it suggested separation instead of unification:

Therefore, we have three objections to the proposal which says that in discussions about taxation only the landowning nobility who pay certain tax might take part directly: first, it is impractical; second it contradicts elements of constitutional theory; and, third, it is not expedient for political purposes.⁷

To put an end to the nobility's immunity to taxes, Albert Sztáray proposed a separate taxation of the nobility differentiated according to wealth in order to preserve the fundamentally different social and legal status of the privileged and the unprivileged, i.e., the system of privileges. He deemed the feudal stratification of society and its sanction by the state untouch-

⁵ [Lajos Kossuth], “Ismét és ismét adó [The tax again and again],” *PH*, Apr. 24, 1842.

⁶ Albert Sztáray, “Háziadó [Domestic tax],” pts. 1 and 2, *V*, Apr. 13 and 16, 1842.

⁷ [Lajos Kossuth], “The tax again and again.”

able, squeezing diverse phenomena of the disintegrating feudal world and transitional society into the schematic duality of large landowning nobility and propertyless common people. His *cautiously progressive* conception of modernization was averse to the disturbing diversity.

Sztáray took a rigid agrarian position in opposition to industrialization and the middle class in keeping with his denial of social equalization; he supported the joining of the *Zollverein* but condemned and discarded the liberal program of the liberation of peasants, equal share of tax burdens, and representative government.⁸

Albert Sztáray's style is enunciating, his arguments are mixtures of traditional and utilitarian elements, and his reasoning is provincial. His arguments include the traditional grievances, defense of the *ancient* constitution, paternalist "peasant-protection," and disdain for the common nobles. From Aurél Dessewffy's political legacy he borrowed the negative evaluation of the landless nobility and the polarization of the society into wealthy property owning noblemen and the propertyless.⁹

The other topic of the dispute on "unification" and "separation" in 1842–43 was the different concept of the nature and causes of the nationality question. Reconstructing and analyzing the conservative approaches will enable us to see whether, as some scholars believe, the conservatives were more tolerant than the liberal reformers who proposed assimilation through the extension of civil rights.¹⁰

⁸ Albert Sztáray, "Nagymihályi levelek [Letters from Nagymihály]," pts. 2 and 3, "Örök-megváltás [Redemption of feudal dependence]," *V*, Jan. 15 and 19, 1842; idem, "Státus-gazdasági elmélkedések [Thoughts on the state economy]," *V*, Apr. 2, 1842. Cf. [Antal Szécsen], "Újabb észrevételek a Pesti Hírlap Szétteltekintés című vezércikkére [New comments on 'Outlook,' *Pesti Hírlap*'s leader]," *V*, Apr. 6, 1842; [Antal Szécsen], "Majorátusok [Primogeniture]," *V*, Sept. 21, 1842; [Antal Szécsen], "Hitebizottságok és majorátusok [Credit committees and primogeniture]," *V*, Oct. 26, 1842; X. [pseudo.], "Adózzunk-e vagy kölcsönözzünk? [Shall we pay tax or borrow?]," *V*, Nov. 12, 1842; Lajos Széchenyi, "Mely adót fizethetni alkotmányos helyzetünk fenntartásául? [What tax could we pay by preserving our constitutional status?]," *V*, Jan. 25 and 28, 1843.

⁹ Several items of Sztáray's and Kossuth's polemic (on the dietal debates about the abuses of county authority) that recurred in Emil Dessewffy's pamphlet, *Uncouth ideas, simplistic views, and immodest plans regarding the problematic questions and the diet*, aimed to influence the diet meeting in May 1843.

¹⁰ Szekfü (1922, 1933), István Deák (1979), Schlett (1999), Evans (2006), Takáts (2007), and Gyurgyák (2007).

The Magyar Nation and the Non-Magyar Nationalities

The nationality issue cropped up as early as 1841 in conservative political writing. Aurél Dessewffy conceived of the nation in terms of conserving and modernizing the state organization, understanding the “propertied” as the “nation.” He demarcated the boundaries of the nation by the criteria of political maturity instead of language or culture. Beside and after loyalty, the means of career advancement was the Hungarian language.¹¹ Similarly to mobility patterned on ennoblement, which meant individual prominence instead of social elevation, official promotion required linguistic Magyarization on an individual and not a mass basis.

Like Dessewffy, Albert Sztáray identified the nation with the nobility and regarded the fears of Germanization and Pan-Slavism to be unfounded.

The memory of Joseph II’s unifying efforts was alive in many people in Hungary, and the rumors concerning the entry into the *Zollverein* also seemed to justify the fears of Germanization. The dread of the Pan-Slav threat was fueled by the expansive politics of the “Northern colossus” and the Slavic movements in Hungary, which were interpreted as its harbingers.

In association with the suppression of the Polish revolt in 1831, the liberal reformers interpreted the autocratic Russian Empire as a dangerous enemy to constitutional progress, and in the early 1840s this image was coupled with threats of Illyrian (Croatian) and even Slovakian national endeavors.¹² The dangers of Germanization and Pan-Slavism recalled the vision of the “nation’s death,” for Herder’s prophesy that the Hungarians were fated to be engulfed in the sea of neighboring peoples was still widespread.¹³ Neither Aurél Dessewffy nor Albert Sztáray found justification for such fears.

In 1842, a pamphlet appeared in Leipzig about the future of Hungary, in which the author, Wolfgang Berg (presumably a pseudonym), defined two options for Hungary: to become either a Russian province, or a German colony. The emancipationist policies of the Hungarian nobility’s reformism was threatening the bases of equilibrium in Europe (the Holy Alliance), the upsetting of which would condemn the Hungarians to weightlessness, whereas the well-being of Hungary could be ensured by

¹¹ Aurél Dessewffy (1887), 39–40, 46–48, 49–52.

¹² Varga (1993). Cf. Davies (1981), 2:3–111, 306–339.

¹³ Herder (1952), 2:476.

the peace of mind and taxation of the nobility in a scheme in which the poor nobility would resign from its privileges.¹⁴ Confronting the European balance of power relations with the Hungarian noblemen's reformist movement reminds the reader of Metternich dichotomies of Europe and Asia, civilization and barbarism, Cisleithania and Hungary, while the statement on the impoverished nobles echoes the writings of Aurél Dessewffy and Albert Sztáray. Both interpretations recommend adaptation to the empire.

In response to anti-Magyar events in Croatia, on June 10, 1842, Kossuth suggested at the Pest county assembly a motion toward the legislative and administrative separation of Croatia from Hungary, if it was its wish. His suggestion was adopted by the assembly. When the resolution had no repercussions in the rest of the counties, upon József Eötvös' influence Pest rescinded the resolution in August.¹⁵ Count Antal Szécsen, a cautiously progressive authority on the nationality issue (especially the Croatian), later, wrote an article on the national question in *Világ*, the 1842, 1843, and 1844 volumes of which featured the motto (rhyming in Hungarian): "Do you wish to cultivate the good of the Nation? Respect the sacred laws of the country. Improve—do not destruct—its ancient institutions! Progress, but soberly and not helter-skelter. That is how we are preparing for a finer and more glorious future." The political parties agree—Szécsen began his exposition—that advisable development must be in harmony with the character of the nation, but this must be based on the clarification of concepts instead of sheer enthusiasm:

For many, the concept of nationality is so tightly interlaced with the mother tongue that they identify the Hungarian nationality with the language. They forget about the glorious periods of our history; they forget the great influence our country exerted on the matters of Europe in various periods of the past, despite the fact that its laws were formulated in a foreign language; these people only calculate the birth and origin of the Hungarian nation in but the [last] few years and apparently are ignorant of the fact that no matter what language was used in our conference rooms in days of yore, the spirit of the Hungarian nation—loyal adherence to the lawful sovereign and constitution—filled the bosoms of our compatriots centuries earlier, just like today. Interpreting this undeniable historical truth falsely, others claim, or claimed, that since our Hungarian nation has survived for centuries without our mother tongue having priority in the poli-

¹⁴ Berg (1842).

¹⁵ [Lajos Kossuth], "Virrasszunk! [Let's keep vigil!]," *PH*, June 19, 1842; "?" [Lajos Kossuth], "Szláv mozgalmak [Slavic movements]," *PH*, June 23, 1842; AB. [Lajos Kossuth], "Visszapillantás a szláv mozgalmakra [Reviewing the Slavic movements]," *PH*, June 26, 1842. Cf. Szabad (1977), 71–72, and Varga (1993), 77–92.

tics of the country, its introduction is unnecessary even today and, in view of the population of different tongues, it was untimely or dangerous.¹⁶

Antal Szécsen argued against linguistic nationalism, stating that the language is not identical with the nationality, but it is its voice. The fostering, development, and love of the national language are indispensable, but they cannot substitute for the spiritual unity of the nation. He stated that the quintessence of the nation is adherence to the fatherland, the state and its institutions. Loyalty to the state is the basis for the spiritual unity, which is expressed and symbolized by the national tongue as the symbol of national character. Antal Szécsen declared:

It is desirable, even necessary that wherever a nation appears as a spiritual individual and not as the aggregate of diverse individuals, it shall enunciate its character—for what else is nationality than the character of the people—in the national tongue. That is why whenever the public matters of the fatherland are at issue, the use of the Hungarian language by the country's inhabitants of a different tongue is rightly demanded ... It should have priority in the dietal and county assemblies; it should be the first and unavoidable condition for promotion in state offices. However, it should not be extended to subjects that have nothing to do with the representation of the nation; our over-enthusiasm for our nationality should not make us pass laws that cannot be sanctioned; we should not use means to promote the case of our nationality and spread our national tongue that, e.g., religious education, are above secular goals; and we should be convinced that righteousness is the best adviser in choosing the most sober and suitable policy in this matter as well.¹⁷

In Szécsen's view, it was not the language but history that created a nation. He then repeated a basic thesis of the liberal reformists, slightly modified and with a shifted meaning. In Kossuth's wording it was: "We must refrain from coercion ... we have the right to require that in our country all branches of the public service be in Hungarian. That's enough; anything more would be unjust and unlawful."¹⁸

Szécsen, similarly to Aurél Dessewffy, regarded the knowledge of the Hungarian language as a precondition for professional advancement and not as a concomitant to the extension of civil rights. His statement that a law is useless without sanction and righteousness, and must be the compass, is a truism. They owed partly to the Slovak protests that were elicited by the unsuccessful attempt to create a Protestant union, collecting the

¹⁶ Antal Szécsen, "Nemzetiség [Nationality]," *V*, Aug. 27, 1842.

¹⁷ Antal Szécsen, "Nationality."

¹⁸ [Lajos Kossuth], "Választási rendszer a városokban [The electoral system in the towns]," *PH*, Nov. 24, 1841.

Calvinist Hungarians and the Lutherans—most of them Slovaks—into a single church, so that the thus created Hungarian Calvinist majority could assimilate the minority Slovaks who professed the Augsburg Confession.¹⁹ Szécsen's main argument was, however, the need for the Magyarization of those rising to the echelon of society and the rejection of the extension of political rights. The conservative reasoning was permeated by the ideal of *natio Hungarica* based on loyalty to the state and the sovereign.

Antal Szécsen divided the Hungarian nationalities into two groups: Germans and Slavs. There was no fear of the national resistance of the Germans, who had vested interests in industry and trade and who had strong consciousness of their origins, unless some practical measures generated their objection:

Different is the case of the Slav inhabitants of the country. I do not wish to speak of Croatia and the annexed parts. The question of language and nationality does have a considerable but not decisive influence on their conditions, therefore the criterion of linguistic resistance is not sufficient to judge the tensions there. Let me speak more importantly of the Slavs of the country and all the linguistic and ethnic parts that are connected to Slav elements. The Slavic movements—as far as I know—have never appeared as hostile to our language and nationality in the public sphere; and although in the northern counties where there are several Slav-speaking nobles, the Latin language could have been supported, yet I maintain that these counties as legislative bodies could not be accused of aversion to our language. However, when some people descended to linguistic proselytizing; when in the diet motions were tabled and found approval which laid claim to influencing the language of the religious and family life of the inhabitants there; when these efforts came to be extended to all classes of society—then was the resistance that all true patriots notice to their despair rightly brought about.²⁰

Antal Szécsen concluded that the reasons for the Slav movement were the European and Hungarian national movements, the excesses in the lower house and the county meetings, and the differences of national character and religion. The movements were not against the Magyars but were the righteous responses to the excesses; their remedy lied in the avoidance of the emotional approach and of the material influencing, and in administering equity and caution.²¹

Antal Szécsen did not share the liberal reformers' fears of Germanization and Pan-Slavism, and defined Illyrism and the Slovak endeavors as

¹⁹ Aurél Dessewffy (1887), 68–72; Varga (1993), 54–64.

²⁰ Antal Szécsen, "Nationality."

²¹ Antal Szécsen, "Nationality."

reactions. His reasoning was not far from Széchenyi's theses voiced in his address to the Academy, identifying linguistic nationalism with the liberal nationalist opposition's policy, assimilation by extension of rights.

The standpoint of the *cautiously progressive* politician was, of course, different from Széchenyi's cultural nationalism at several points. For instance, the speaker at the Academy thought—at that time—that Germanization and Pan-Slavism, the visions of the nation's death, were real dangers, although he judged the character of the nationality movements in Hungary similarly to Szécsen. He was concerned that the Hungarian pottery was more frail than the German and Slavic stoneware, and this was why he recommended loyalty to the empire. Széchenyi's 1842 interpretation was related to the dramatic conception of the question in the wake of Wolfgang Berg's pamphlet, rather than to the trivializing approach characterized by Szécsen's and Aurél Dessewffy's views.

By contrast, Antal Szécsen's conservative position at that time—different from the conservatives' interpretation around 1847 and 1848—was not based on Herder's prophesy but on historical right, rooted in the aristocratic frames and the identification of the nation with the aristocracy.

Organic development in harmony with the character of the nation was *cautious progress* in Szécsen's view. Progress that did not affect loyalty to the monarch, the state, and its institutions did not upset the former balance. Organic development only implied the spread of the Hungarian language in the upper regions of the state hierarchy, without even deliberating the possibility of the extension of political rights. A superficial glance cast from afar might seem like tolerance, but looked at more closely, was the negation of emancipation, the preservation of the basic conditions. Széchenyi's idea for the assimilation of the nationalities was not based on "rhetorical patriotism," or on linguistic nationalism, but pitting quantity against quality, on the superiority of morals and culture. Antal Szécsen's demand was for the Hungarian knowledge of the political stratum, with the rest—the overwhelming majority—being ignored. He did not want to assimilate the nationalities as such because the non-privileged had no weight in his view. Antal Szécsen's interpellation applied the criterion of the traditional court party conservatism, the concept of the nation equal with the aristocracy, to the relationship between Magyars and non-Magyars. Széchenyi's interpretation of the nation was later heavily drawn upon by the conservatives. In the early 1840s, however, the position of the conservatives in general and their views on the national question in particular were still determined by the traditional conservative schemes: loyalty to the sovereign, order, the aristocracy, and the ancient constitution.

Only some elements of Széchenyi's conception (several years later) became practicable tools of interpretation for them.

Széchenyi's presidential address to the Academy on November 27, 1842 and the responses it elicited—within the liberal camp—gave rise to new conservative interpretations. Antal Szécsen published his article "Our nationalizing efforts and the Slavic movements" related to that address in the January 7, 1843 issue of *Világ*. Szécsen reiterated and reinterpreted his earlier thesis and argumentation. His rationale in the article was that in Hungary there were two nations: Hungarians and Croats. The rest had no right to lay claim to national independence or existence, as they were only nationalities, not nations. The possibility for the nationalities to believe that their role was that of a nation was the outcome of the erroneous foundations on which the European and Hungarian theories based the awakening of national consciousness, by identifying the nation with the language, whereas its cornerstone could only be history. He claimed that identifying the national character with the language led to the weakening of the historical right and the confusion of nations with nationalities, generating unlawful claims. The Slav movements were not responses to the lawful moves of the diet and the government, but reactions to the initiatives of the lower house majority and some of the counties. Antal Szécsen concluded that the presupposition of the initiative—the identification of nation and language—had created the truly misleading and dangerous delusion, upsetting the historical equilibrium, and all else was a derivative of this notion.

By Szécsen's diagnosis, the ideological foundation of the liberal reformers was mistaken and dangerous because it leveled off the hierarchical relation between the nationalities and the nation, and jeopardized the national equilibrium by producing new and unlawful rivals. Not only the Hungarian liberal nationalist reformers were to blame for this. It was a general characteristic shared by all liberal movements in Europe, which provided the pattern against the only valid historical right.²²

This young aristocrat from Croatia also connected the regulation of *aviticitas* to the broadening of the system of primogeniture conserving the feudal structure.²³

Világ included several articles and statements, at the turn of 1842/1843, that reflected on Széchenyi's opening address to the Acad-

²² Antal Szécsen, "Nemzetesítési törekvéseink s a szláv mozgalmak [Our nationalizing efforts and the Slavic movements]," *V*, Jan. 7, 1843.

²³ [Antal Szécsen], "New comments on 'Outlook,' *Pesti Hírlap*'s leader"; [Antal Szécsen], "Primogeniture"; [Antal Szécsen], "Credit committees and primogeniture."

emy, Miklós Wesselényi's related proclamation, and comments by Ferenc Pulszky, Lajos Kossuth, and Count Dániel Vay. In a series of articles the paper confuted the liberal reformers' conception of enlarging the body politic with civil rights holders (hoping to gradually reach a modern national state in the long run), but the paper did not share Széchenyi's views that the nationality movements were a reaction to the Magyarizing tendency.²⁴

The liberal response to Széchenyi's address to the Academy was reviewed in *Világ* by Ferenc Kállay, a member of the Society of Hungarian Scholars (later called the Hungarian Academy of Sciences).²⁵ He countered the liberal thesis which posited that cultural superiority was not at all an automatic mechanism, for in the Szepesség and Sáros county the Slovaks assimilated the Germans, while in Transylvania in several places the Hungarians were assimilated by the Romanians. Kállay thought that these examples were exceptions because in earlier times the Slovaks and Romanians had been moved to these scattered settlements to replace the dwindling population decimated by wars. With a large pool of recruitment and greater fertility, they isolated the culturally more advanced Hungarians and Germans who were severed from their hinterland, locked up in towns.²⁶ Kállay claimed that in the long run, the melting force of cultural superiority would have to be asserted.²⁷

In his "Critique of the proclamation," Ferenc Kállay criticized Miklós Wesselényi's "Proclamation on the question of the Hungarian and Slav nationalities," and the project of Magyarization via the extension of civil

²⁴ [József] Andrassy, "Gróf Széchenyi István és az időszaki sajtó a nyelv s nemzetiség ügyében [Count István Széchenyi and the press on the issue of language and nationality]," pts. 1–6, *V*, Feb. 1, 8, 22, 25, Mar. 11, and Apr. 1, 1843. Cf. Bártfai (1943) 1:425–426, 430–439.

²⁵ Ferenc Kállay's book of constitutional law, *A nemzeti képviselő tudománya* [The science of national representation], was not allowed by the censor to be published. The manuscript is located at OSZKK, Quart. Hung. 1206. For its evaluation, see Bérenger and Kecskeméti (2005).

²⁶ Ferenc Kállay, "Széchenyi István gróf beszéde és a P[esti] Hírlap [Count István Széchenyi's address and P[esti] Hírlap]," *V*, Dec. 7, 1842; Ferenc Kállay, "Magyar és szláv ügy feletti vitatkozások. Wesselényi Miklós báró vétője [Debates about the Magyar and Slav matter]," *V*, Dec. 31, 1842; Ferenc Kállay, "Jegyzetek a Pesti Hírlap 210. szám alatti vezércikkére [Notes on the editorial in no. 210 of Pesti Hírlap]," pts. 1 and 2, *V*, Jan. 25 and 28, 1843; Ferenc Kállay, "Felelet Kossuth Lajos úrnak [Reply to Mr. Lajos Kossuth]," *V*, Feb. 1, 1843.

²⁷ Ferenc Kállay, "Olvasás és olvasztás [Thawing and melting]," pts. 1–4, *V*, Mar. 4, 8, 11, and 15, 1843.

rights onto the past. He did so by condemning the French constitutionality of his age—in the wake of Prussian conservative authors—and expressing sympathy with the autocratic government of the Russian Empire.²⁸ It must have startled his contemporaries, since the counterpart to Toqueville's book, Marquis Custine's four-tome *Russia in 1839* appeared around this time, shocking its readers.²⁹

Let us summarize the conservative position on the nationality question. A political writer of that side, Count Emil Dessewffy, condensed the problem into the following question:

How to handle the cause of the Hungarian language in the diet is an extremely delicate question; which is much more important than the question—debated now in the papers—whether the legislation and the counties may be reproached for incorrect conduct concerning the spread of the language.

Dessewffy wrote that whether one agreed with Széchenyi in defining the Slav movements as a reaction to Magyarization, or one shared Wesselényi's and Kossuth's opinion that attributed them to Slav propaganda, they all agreed that the Hungarian legislation had one real task: to put an end to the agitation. The right means to do so was not in the attempts to assimilate the non-Magyars, as these were necessarily and inevitably doomed to failure. Instead of these efforts in vain the task is to enact the Hungarian language as the official language of administration and the higher classes. Let the nationalities foster their own tongues and literature, he stated; the job of the Hungarian diet was to Magyarize the state instead of trying to assimilate the unprivileged masses. If the diet adopted this feasible and desirable task, it should not expect the population unfamiliar with the Hungarian administrative and legislative language to know it, but should see to it that they could learn it. Apart from higher education, the Hungarian language should be taught in the lower schools first of all, while in Croatia Latin should remain the language of public service.³⁰

Emil Dessewffy's concise propositions succinctly show the bottom line of the conservative position. The objective was not the transformation of the traditional relations of social equilibrium, as it would be a futile effort: the question of national character was decided elsewhere. The nation, by definition, was positioned above the unprivileged masses, its

²⁸ Kállay (1843).

²⁹ Custine (1844). Cf. Kennan (1972), Pipes (1979), Berlin (1979), Léontovitch (1987), and Dénes (2006), 311–344.

³⁰ Emil Dessewffy (1843b), 22–28.

character determined by the state. The state had to be governed by the Hungarian nation, which in turn comprised the privileged, the aristocracy. It was possible to rise into it, but only by the individual's ascendancy through ennoblement.

Neither the extension of political rights, nor assimilation was part of the conservative concept of nation; it meant the aristocratic nation, the identification of state, aristocracy, and nation. What appeared as tolerance from afar was segregation at a closer look. What appeared as righteousness from afar was the defense of the aristocratic social organization to a keener eye. The conservative interpretations of the relation between Magyars and nationalities are in line with the social organizational schemes of the *natio Hungarica* of the aristocracy and the *misera plebs contribuens*, privileged and unprivileged, landlords and peasants, and lords and servants.

Us and Them: Aristocracy vs. Democracy

The conservative concepts of society and nation were coupled with an adequate concept of the state. Two weeks before the meeting of the diet, an article signed by X. U. was published in *Nemzeti Újság* (National Gazette), devoted mainly to the conservative conception of the bases of social organization and the state.³¹ Its conceptual reconstruction reveals the backbone of conservative views on state and society.

Nemzeti Újság was committed to the throne and the altar, the constitution, and authority. "Religion, throne, and constitution are the guardians and guiding stars of our paper," was the slogan of the more rigidly conservative press organ than *Világ*.³² The central goal was "progress without incitement" in harmony with religion (i.e., Roman Catholicism), the service of the nation guaranteed with sober moderation, and the agreement of

³¹ X. U. [Sándor Lipthay], "Az aranybulla s ellene forralt demokratai küzdelmek [The Golden Bull and the concocted democratic efforts against it]," *NU*, May 3, 1843. The Golden Bull Royal Diploma was given to the *Barons* by Andrew II in 1222, guaranteed their privileges and the right to resistance against the sovereign. It had become one of the main sources of the Hungarian public law, its reinterpretations tended to use it as a Hungarian *Magna Charta* of the nobility, the *populus Hungaricus* against the monarch and often against the magnates also, including the free election of the sovereign by the nobility, their privilege not to pay taxes, nobility's habeas corpus, and their right for resistance. Lipthay used it as synonym of the ancient constitution.

³² Mihály Kovacsóczy, "Hírlapi jelentés [Press report]," Pest, 1843, OSZKK, Miscellanea, 504 258; Dezsényi (1941), 9–12.

the social classes. The writer of the article “The Golden Bull and the democratic struggles against it” spoke in this vein. On the basis of some passages of the anonymous editorial in issue no. 40 of *Nemzeti Újság* entitled “The principle of political stability,” the author, Sándor Liphay, can be identified.³³

At the beginning of Sándor Liphay’s argument, the postulates of the isolated individual, the natural state, and natural law concepts are criticized.³⁴ Liphay stated, that if we take the isolated individual and natural law as the starting point, then we fail to arrive at the basis of the state, which is property, as well as social character, and thus mutual reference would be inconceivable. State and property are notions that can only be interpreted in correlation with each other. Thus we see that instead of the social contract being the concept that the line of argument is based on, it is rather mankind, property, and the state.³⁵

Sándor Liphay defines the antithesis of aristocracy vs. democracy by pitting stability, landed property, and conservation against radicalism, the evening out of property, radical innovation, and sheer numbers. One is based on the state and property, the other on the isolated individual, that is, the natural state and natural law. The conservative reasoning implies the inequality of human qualities, but the journalist draws a different conclusion.

He states that the foundations of the hierarchy of human society are property relations. The different places in the social hierarchy are not legitimated by the different human qualities but by the different social roles, which are dependent partly on the functions of the organism of a state and partly on earlier achievements—historical merit. The differences are legitimate because the status and role of the incumbents of the different positions are different.

It was stated that those who break down the organic theory of the state into its elements do not comprehend that their functions and legitimacy can only be found in their interdependency and their relations to the whole. Liphay based this doctrine not only on Adam Müller’s and Savigny’s state interpretations, but also drew on Kossuth’s vocabulary, choosing the words “separation” and “unification,” that is, the “chemical process” of unification.

³³ [Sándor Liphay], “Politikai stabilitás elve [The principle of political stability],” pts. 1–3, *NU*, Feb. 14, Mar. 11, and 13, 1845.

³⁴ Liphay (1843).

³⁵ Cf. Savigny (1840, 2002).

As regards the Hungarian aristocracy, it is strictly based in our country, just like everywhere else, on the ideal of the landed estate, the landowning aristocracy. "The royal gift and the estate ennoble." This principle will be ridiculed as stale obscurity without legality or ground as long as we do not realize that in the great, rich, and powerful England, the immortal, peerlessly strong, and politically powerful aristocracy still rests on this foundation. Now the fashionable democratic party, trying to get a firm foothold in our country, too, is directing all its indefatigable efforts to influence the legislative opinions, to disrupt this principle radically, and to destroy the aristocracy's strength, deprived of its support, the landed estate.

Sándor Liphay set the stable estate, the unwavering aristocracy (i.e., nobility), the unchangeable constitution (identified with the Golden Bull), and the English example against the abolition of landed estates, the erosion of the decisive role of the aristocracy, the annihilation of the constitution, and the French model (based on Gentz's translation of Burke's reflections upon the French revolution).³⁶ He writes:

Should we undo the ties that still keep our national representation firmly together, our constitution will not last out another year, given our municipal system. The democratic denomination is playing a clandestine game against our ancient institutions ... As soon as this benevolent political party achieves capacity, forced redemption of land, abolition of primogeniture, seizure of ecclesiastical property, religious schisms in urban meetings, and first and foremost, popular representation on the basis of the population of the country, and in general, as complete a distribution and mobilization of the landed estate as possible, etc.—to cite the basic principles implicit in the treacherously enticing articles of *Pesti Hírlap*—and the death-knell of the ancient aristocracy is sounded; the true nobleman turns into a peasant ... the priest into a dervish living on charity; the elected citizen will be a pettifogger, a gambler, a simple technician stooped down under his thirst for money and political incapacity; commerce and industry will be represented by pettifoggers; lawyers, journalists and professors will turn into ministers. But what about the country? It will be unhappy. It is the question—a life-and-death question—in our country today whether the system of transformation will be based on the aristocracy and the landowning estate adopting the political principle of England, or on lawyers' and journalists' whims, on the dire emptiness of political superficiality, like in France. To make the decision is the task of our age: the nobility, the affluent middle class, and the sober sons of the nation are ready to base their decision on dry political deliberation coupled with cool caution excluding passionate outbursts but also with elevated self-esteem and unflinching manly determination. Far be it from us to stick to all obsolete letters of our Bull contradicting our contemporary circumstances. We do not support immunity from the taxation it stipulated, nor *de porcis regiis*, but we are deeply convinced that to uproot the aristocratic system constituting the basic principle of the Bull with rebellion, zealotry and anarchy will cause the death of the country.³⁷

³⁶ Burke (1790, 1793, 1990).

³⁷ Liphay (1843). Cf. *Golden Bull*, §§. 22.

Here, the protection or subversion of the constitution is identical with salvaging or destroying the Hungarian nation (equated with the nobility). The subversion of the constitution would lead to the decay of all strata of society. The correct policy is the defense of the aristocratic constitution and the suppression of the democratic trend. The place of the best in the state machinery is based on the possession of property ensuring their independence and on the possibility to pass down this wealth to their offspring. In his line of thought, property and privilege are the inalienable attributes of the nobility, the cornerstones of the aristocracy.

In the closing passage of his article, Sándor Liphay repeated and extended his ideas of the difference between the adherents of aristocracy and democracy, conservatives and radicals:

The democrats should accept the status quo as a starting point; they should not tear it from the old times from which it has arisen; they should resign from excesses concerning people, things and principles; they should stop obstructing the government that is making its efforts within the limits of law; they should give up their ochlocratic activity pursued with passion earlier and under the disguise of modesty now; they should accept the possibilities and reject impossibilities; they should turn to those who wish to adjust the ancient constitution of the country to the newly developed social requirements but respect the stock that has withstood the vicissitudes of centuries, embracing it with unswerving filial affection—and all the enthusiastic, honest, righteous, and law-abiding sons of the country join hands with them. By contrast, you who take as the gauge of your politics the yearnings of your day-dreams instead of ... the clear fact; where have you come from, you who set the indestructible and infusible rocks of your obsession against the positive aspects of the world, nations and mankind; who wish to turn the entire earth into *Respublicas*, *Atlantises*, *Commonwealths*, and *closed commercial states*; your profession is not politics; your profession is a mistake built on delusion; your profession is the extinguishing of the ideals of government and obedience; your profession is the extermination of religion, morality, the dearest human conviction, and the peace of the world.

In Sándor Liphay's presentation, the goals and activity of the Hungarian liberals, whom he called democrats and radicals, can be condensed into the following list: *tabula rasa*, the disowning of the past, breaking the continuity, excesses, paralyzing the work of the legitimate government, mob rule, impossible goals, illusionism, obsessed attempt to realize utopias, subverting religion, morality, and the global peace, and endangering the foundations of the state. The conservatives are characterized by the polar opposite: continuity with the past, improving on the given conditions, protection of the Hungarian constitution, fostering of the basic—aristocratic—institutions, and an outlook based on real life and visible facts.³⁸

³⁸ On contemporaneous philosophical endeavors, see Mester (2006) and Percz (2008).

Three months earlier, in February 1843, the chief editor of *Nemzeti Újság*, Count János Majláth proposed the following antitheses: people of the “gallop” vs. conservatives; subverters vs. protectors of the constitution; democrats vs. aristocrats; supporters of the county vs. supporters of the government; attackers of the Catholic church and clergy vs. the supporters of their privileges; separatists vs. those who wish to tighten the relations with the empire; and improvisers vs. thoughtful progressives.³⁹

The two conservative authors’ self-images and their concepts of the adversary are more or less identical. True, in Sándor Liphay’s writing the “separatist vs. supporter of the empire,” a dichotomy of a notable afterlife, is missing (and the county vs. government support antithesis is not so explicit). While Majláth’s pairs of concepts referred to the actual bones of contention in the current political life, Liphay addressed himself to the political theoretical issues. Beside a concrete parallel—“protector vs. subverter of the constitution,” they shared the approach: both mainly formulated what the conservative position did *not* contain.

When they tried to define what the conservatives’ political commitment meant, they came up with cautious progress, constitutionality, and order. “Order” was the key word of the conservative speakers of the 1843/44 diet, whether they were arguing against trial by jury, misuse of county authority, renewal of inner city structure, or accountability of the government. The *order superior to the parties*, just as the order of the pro-government conservative party and the order of the government, became the key notions of the conservative offensive in 1845/47. However, elements of the conservatives’ self-identity and the image of their enemy were already clear before the diet: aristocracy vs. democracy, government vs. the counties, constitution vs. subversion, thoughtful progress vs. improvisation, organic development vs. arbitrary intervention, qualified politicizing vs. dilettantism, reality vs. utopia, government vs. poetry, order vs. anarchy, and English vs. French development. From May 1843 till November 1844, the liberal reformers’ proposals and the conservative counter arguments were put forth in the disputes of “separation” and “unification” in the assembly hall in Pozsony.

³⁹ János Majláth, “Gr. Dessewffy Aurél: Vágtatási és konzervatív elvek gyökérkülönbsége [Count Aurél Dessewffy: The root difference between ‘galloping’ and conservative ideas],” *NU*, Feb. 8, 1843.

Law and Order: Which Kind? (1843–1844)

In the lower house of the diet convoked in May 1843, the opposition had a decisive majority. During the dietal session, they presented several bills to the upper house about the streamlining of the economy, unifying the interests of the social strata, and modernizing the state organization. The upper house conservative majority led by Counts György Apponyi and Antal Szécsen, however, sent them back one by one, proposing amendments so that eventually the reform initiatives did not reach the monarch. The leading spokesmen of the lower house conservatives, Ede Zsedényi, György Mailáth, and Pál Somssich (deputies of Szepes, Baranya, and Somogy counties, respectively), represented the standpoint of the upper house conservatives against the oppositionist majority in the district meetings of the lower house.

The *cautious progressive* leaders of the upper house had already contacted Imperial Chancellor Metternich before the diet. Almost parallel with the dissolving of the diet in November 1844, Ferdinand V, King of Hungary, appointed Count György Apponyi Chancellor of Hungary and Baron Samu Jósika Chancellor of Transylvania, upon Metternich's recommendation.¹ The informal cooperation between the imperial government and the Hungarian young conservative politicians was raised openly to the level of government politics, and the cautiously progressive Hungarian conservatives prepared to launch an offensive with the slogan "lawful order above the parties." The implicit aim was to achieve a conservative majority in the lower house of the diet to be convoked in 1847. The slogan of the conservative offensive was already key with the spokesmen of the 1843/44 diet, and became widespread after 1845.

What is to be Done with the Counties?

The disorders of county authority and the therapies for them were thrashed out in the diet and in the press at length. Zsigmond Kemény wrote his pamphlet *Canvassing and its antidotes* around this time; Kosuth devoted a series of articles to, and titled, "The most delicate of all questions," and some time later Eötvös also expressed his stand on the

¹ Staatsarchiv, Vienna. Kabinettsarchiv. Staatskonferenzakten, s. 1844. 517; Andics (1952–1981), 3:140–141, (1975), 214–215, Varga (1980a), 727–747, Vörös (1980a), bk. 2:892–897.

issue.² All the writings were connected to the reports of the committee delegated by the diet to investigate specific offences by the counties. The committee started its work after the sovereign had ordered the diet to put this issue on the agenda.

The difference between the liberal and cautiously conservative approaches was not whether they sought for a solution or wanted to redress the transgressions, it was rather the proposed remedies that differentiated them. The conservatives thought things were to be set right by ousting the propertyless common nobles from county politics and subordinating the county to the government. During the diet, Sztáray's proposition of 1842 acquired special weight due to several offences by the counties, first of all by the prevention of electing Ferenc Deák deputy. The action of the Zala county advocates of "no taxation" to topple Deák could be connected to the conservative thesis that the poor nobility of the counties were ill-suited to political activity. The conservative Ede Zsedényi argued in support of making the counties amenable, saying,

Since real reform issues began to appear in the political arena pulsating with vitality, we have had to realize to our dismay that they have remained in the phase of preparation, never reaching enactment. Why is that so? ... It is not through social reforms we should help but we should give radical help to the counties because the source of evil is the impotence of the counties to implement the simplest regulation of law and order.³

In a pamphlet on the eve of the diet, Emil Dessewffy made the following point: "The municipal system is drawing close to a turning point: either we

² Kemény Zsigmond, "Korteskedés és ellenszerei. Könyvismertetés [Campaigning and its antidotes. Book review]," *V*, Oct. 14, 1843; [Kossuth Lajos], "Zala s az adó [Zala county and the tax]," *PH*, Apr. 13, 1843; [Kossuth Lajos], "A pillanat kénytelensége [The compulsion of the moment]," *PH*, Apr. 20, 1843; Károly Andrássy, "Az országlási modor" egy új neme [A new way of governing]," *PH*, Apr. 27, 1843; Károly Andrássy, "Pótlék [Supplement]," *PH*, Apr. 30, 1843; Miklós Wesselényi, "Nemzeti korállapot [Current diagnosis of the national situation]," pts. 1–6, *PH*, June 15, 18, 22, 25, 29 and July 2, 1843; Miklós Wesselényi, "Pótlék [Supplement]," *PH*, July 16, 1843; [Lajos Kossuth], "A kérdések legkényesbise [The most delicate of all questions]," pts. 1–3, *PH*, July 20–23, 1843; [Lajos Kossuth], "Adalék a teendők többi részéhez [Addenda to the rest of the tasks]," *PH*, July 27, 1843; [Lajos Kossuth], "A megyék [The counties]," *PH*, Nov. 9, 1843; For the precedent, see [Lajos Kossuth], "Megyei hatósághatár [Scope of county authority]," *PH*, Jan. 6, 1842; [Lajos Kossuth], "Megyei szerkezet [County structure]," *PH*, Jan. 9, 1842. Most of the other articles and pamphlets are also related to this exchange of ideas among the liberal reformers. Cf. Emil Dessewffy (1843b) 29–43, Eötvös (1846) 19–176, and Lajos Széchenyi, "Korteskedés [Campaigning]," pts. 1–3, *V*, May 10, 13, and 17, 1843.

³ Ferenc Kovács (1894), 3:460.

shall coordinate it or it will be done by others, and unless we are sensible enough to act ourselves, the latter will be inevitable. It is high time to accustom ourselves to this idea.” Here, in the pamphlet, the former role of the counties, that is, the protection of the constitution, is now anachronistic, and the counties are ill suited for the new role of the initiation of progress.⁴ He goes on to say that the remedy is to decrease the weight of incapacities and increase that of the capacities, i.e., the erudite, wealthy nobility. Emil Dessewffy, similarly to the ideas proclaimed by his uncle Albert Sztáray and by his elder brother Aurél, stated that the uneducated, poor nobility must be excluded from the county meetings and the lower house elections, and the county must be turned into an executive and consultative organ.⁵

Seemingly, the events in Zala county surrounding Ferenc Deák confirmed Aurél Dessewffy’s and Albert Sztáray’s rejection of legal equality among the nobility. However, the real conclusion was formulated by Kossuth, who did not take the restoration of order in the counties to be a police issue, and did not seek the solution along the line of eliminating county autonomy and increasing dependence on the government. Kossuth spun on the threads of his earlier dispute with Sztáray, writing:

The county structure must be preserved intact ... the most effective way to do so is the introduction of the representative system ... This is the most radical antidote that can do away with the disease caused by lack of liberty and that caused by the lack of order ... The only basis for the systematization of the county structure is the representative system ... A representative system is only possible on the basis of popular representation; without it—reduced only to the aristocracy—it would be either law crippling oligarchism or the most incredible nonsense ... As soon as it is acknowledged that the dead letter of the representative system be translated into reality for the dietal status and municipal structure of the royal towns and free districts, snail’s pace caution must also recognize that free communities be represented in the county meetings and elections not only seemingly but in actuality ... Those who raise their voice on the subject of remedying the county abuses ... suggest in their arguments that they do not regard police and penal regulations a radical antidote ... Nearly all admit that the radical treatment would be directed at the representative system ... The first means recommended for the warding off if the trespasses of the counties is the representation of the liberated communities ... The people’s representative system is an unavoidable goal of the future; we shall either have it, or no longer be a constitutional nation. It is the right time and opportunity to lay the groundwork of this process by accepting the representation of the free communities.⁶

⁴ Emil Dessewffy (1843b), 33.

⁵ Emil Dessewffy (1843b), 29–43.

⁶ [Lajos Kossuth], “The most delicate of all questions,” pt. 2; [Lajos Kossuth], “Irányelvek [Guidelines],” *PH*, June 23, 1843.

Kossuth not only objected to the restriction of the county system to the privileged, nor did he remain simply on a theoretical plane in naming popular representation in the county system as the future course, but he also immediately proposed the practical first step of the representation in the county assembly of the free communities who had redeemed themselves. He also wished to provide accurately defined regulations for the procedure of the elections and meetings, and to strictly penalize all infringement of regulations. The representation of free tax paying communities on the basis of tax payment, and spiritual and moral qualification (at the level of Hungarian literacy), was a cornerstone of his conception. As regards the offences of the counties, Kossuth declared, it was not the county, nor the government (as the conservatives believed), but the autonomous judiciary that was the competent forum.⁷

In contrast to József Eötvös' later articles, Kossuth did not think that the counties could or should be short-circuited; he deemed that the cause of the unification of interests could be promoted by the transformation of the old feudal structure. The starting point, in his view, was the renewed county system based on popular representation, redemption of the peasants' feudal obligations, the autonomy of the judiciary, the separation of powers, and free press.

Thus, the position of Aurél and Emil Dessewffy and Albert Sztáray—to modernize the feudal-municipal concept of the counties towards more dependence on the government—was not only confronted by the (later) discarding or mending of the county system, on the one hand, and its uncritical acceptance and glorifying conservation, on the other, but also with the practical conception of the county system based on popular representation embedded in broader perspectives.

During the lower house dispute held in the district meetings between January 16 and 20, 1844, the conservative deputy of Szepes county, Ede Zsedényi, named the government as the authority to put an end to the disorders of the county assemblies. He wanted to transfer control over the county elections from the diet to the government, because, he argued, the legislative power could not be juridical and at the same time not injure the principle of the separation of powers. He thought that only the government could ensure lawful order in the counties, for no order could ensue from disorder, whereas the diet itself was a body in need of regulation. It was the government, the agency competent in the execu-

⁷ [Lajos Kossuth], "The most delicate of all questions," pts. 1–3; [Lajos Kossuth], "Addenda to the rest of the tasks."

tion and enforcement of the laws and regulation, which was qualified for this task.⁸

István Bezerédy, the liberal deputy of Tolna county, pointed out that Zsedényi restricted his critique to the diet, exempting the government from his critical approach. Count Gedeon Ráday, the liberal deputy of Pest county remarked: "It is to be feared that if we relinquish this only guarantee still in our hands [i.e., the autonomy of the counties] to the government, we shall remain without any guarantee."⁹

The arguments presented in political journalism cropped up in the dietal disputes somewhat simplified, and a bill was passed to stop the abuse of authority in the counties. It was drafted in opposition to the conservative position that wished to enhance the government's jurisdiction and delimit the body politic. The upper house, however, prevented it from being enacted.

Conservative Arguments against Juries

The proposals of the liberal reformers, still a minority at this time, were also put on the agenda of the lower house. In addition to the conservative majority's propositions to the committee on criminal law delegated by the diet of 1839/40 and sitting between 1841 and 1843. The liberal's proposals, which included trial by jury and the abolition of capital and corporeal punishment, received a majority vote. Still, it failed to pass as a law, not even reaching the monarch because the conservative majority of the upper house voted against it.¹⁰ The leaders of the lower house conservatives were naturally opposed to it: Somssich wanted a jury of noblemen, while Zsedényi and Mailáth did not want a jury at all.

Mailáth categorically refused the idea with reference to professional competence and impartiality, as well as the historical conditions:

The good qualities we attribute to a jury are not specific qualities of a jury but are displayed by other institutions as well. The statement that jurors are far more impartial and incorruptible than professional judges cannot be verified, for a juror who dislikes the culprit or has been offended by him will pass a harsher sentence; this cannot happen in a permanent court for the culprit can only offend the status, and not the judge in person ... before a (professional) judge, there is no man of this or that party, there is only the accused and the accuser.

⁸ Ferenc Kovács (1894), 3:472.

⁹ Ferenc Kovács (1894), 3:480.

¹⁰ Varga (1980a), 157–158.

Somssich had a different opinion from Mailáth's on this issue:

Juries as judicial bodies are the best and they are indispensably necessary political institutions to ensure constitutional life in all the best constitutional countries. However, ... the jury system cannot be built on a broader basis than what the constitution stands on without jeopardizing the existing constitution. Thus, we may lay claim to juries in our constitutional country, but they must exclusively comprise people from the Estates endowed with constitutional rights, that is, juries of noblemen in the counties.¹¹

Mailáth had theoretical objections to trial by jury, Somssich—in line with his instructions—wished to have it adjusted to the system of aristocratic institutions. Zsedényi, for one, argued against the introduction of juries with reference to social reasons.

It is not possible to develop a real jury in our country as long as our constitution rests on the estates instead of popular representation, as long as the masses are at lower levels of intellectual development, and the spirit of the age is unfamiliar with the idea of this institution in our country ... In the contemporary state of public mentality and social privileges, a jury has no real or beneficial influence, and it is a premature project that cannot be realized peacefully; a project that cannot be realized for want of suitable personnel ... The minority proposition says: let there be jury and there will be a just milieu. I would reverse it: let there be a middle class and then we can speak about the jury ... We generate claims in non-nobles, which we cannot satisfy in lawful ways. Premature plans annihilate their fruit not only in the current year but maybe for good ... Are we to support an improvement that has no response in our country, that has already been turned down [i.e., in the criminal law committee] and may now, with a small forced margin of a vote or two perhaps be carried—under the reservation that the members of the jury can only be members of the noble estate? Is it then a jury or a privileged court? It is a privileged court, which adds a new privilege to the existing privileges of the nobility and widens the gap between nobles and non-nobles. It is like someone who wishes to jump over a ditch but keeps digging it wider and deeper every day ... Wherever the constitution rests on historic foundations, progress must be made slowly and gradually, the improvements are to be made in view of all interests; wherever it happened differently, it was the work or herald of a revolution.¹²

Thus, Zsedényi's argument against trial by jury can be summed up in the following. The jury would not serve the interest of the non-privileged as it would only give a semblance of equality, and that, in turn, would incur disillusion and enhance social tensions. The people were immature to have trial by jury, and the Hungarian aristocratic political institutions were

¹¹ Ferenc Kovács (1894), 4:17–18.

¹² Ferenc Kovács (1894), 4:20, 22, 24–27. Zsedényi's stylistic device is reminiscent of Aurél Dessewffy's (1843), 39.

incompatible with democratic institutions including the jury. The idea of trial by jury was unpopular among the Hungarian nobility, for the nobles were uninterested in introducing democratic institutions and letting social tensions arise through them.

The liberal deputy of Borsod, Bertalan Szemere, answered Zsedényi's arguments, to wit:

I must wholly disagree with the deputy of Szepes who thinks that the introduction of the jury is not feasible because of the relations among our classes; and moreover I disagree, as in his concessions to the people he keeps turning in a vicious circle: when we urge for the people's tribunal, he proposes popular representation; when we urge for the latter, for example in the towns, he wants a narrow quota of qualifications; so the people are everywhere in his words and nowhere in his proposals.¹³

The Dietal Weight of the Cities

The monarch decreed that the diet to reassemble in May 1843 should have the discussion and legal regulation of the dietal representation of towns on the agenda. The delegates of the towns were namely present in the lower house meetings, but they only had consultative right and, similarly to the chapters, had one vote. At the same time, it was highly questionable whether the delegates of the towns did represent the interests of the town dwellers since only a fragment of the urban population, the patricians, had influence on the elections of town deputies. It was therefore understandable that the government and the conservative camp expected a rise in their weight in the lower house through the city votes. The spokesmen of the liberal reformers, however, connected the regulation of the dietal votes of town delegates with the transformation of the inner structure of urban municipalities. The aim was, the liberals claimed, that the town delegates truly represent the genuine urban populations instead of just having a larger number of dietal votes, while the political frames of the oligarchic town structures were left unchanged. It was highly expedient to do away with this anomaly. But it was not at all immaterial how it would take place.

Let us recall what Kölcsey wrote in his diary about the core of the urban question:

The interest of the middle class is not true interest, for only the interest of the urban oligarchy is alive and blazoned forth; the interests of the population of the towns are

¹³ Ferenc Kovács (1894), 4:36.

silent and trampled down. While the latter is silent, the former bows its head to the court and wrangles with the nobility.¹⁴

Kölcsey also embarked upon the dietal representation of the town at a greater length:

In our country, the opposition has been in the nobility from the beginning. This nobility, quite without parallel, has been split into two parts; one part [the aristocracy] drifted towards the throne, the other constituted the House of Representatives, and believing that the tax revenues also belonged in its jurisdiction, declared that it represented the interest of the people. What is the situation as far as the towns are concerned? Seeing that their place assigned to them by nature was occupied, they could not do it. However, they also went to the House of Representatives, and why didn't they shake hands there? But, gentlemen, how would it have been possible? After all, the deputies of the nobility belong to the privileged class: accordingly, they could not undertake the representation of all people's interests, and thus, concord was impossible between the nobility and the middle class. That is indeed just right. Had the bourgeoisie found the nobility—like everywhere else—in the upper house, they would be opposed both to them and the throne. Here, however, they are forced in the same house with the majority of the nobility, and seeing their natural adversary at their side, they withdraw shyly into the background and from this tight corner they began winking at the throne. Now, tell me, how will you create unity among the diverse elements of the lower house? How are you going to exercise clear and universal opposition? But this must be exercised, if we do not want to sink and be drowned. Let us make a try, gentlemen! The elements apparently act counter to this effort, but there are common interests under which they might be united: nation's life and nation's liberty. You have learned a lot, my friends, you know that Lavoisier brought fire out of water, which our old Ovid would never have believed to be possible. Chemistry is a useful science: it can unite different elements, not only separate them from each other. Go and make an experiment, and—who can tell—history may guide you to the recognition of a chemical relationship that you dare not even dream of today.¹⁵

Speaking for the moral demand of the unification of interests, Kölcsey urged the liberal reformers of the lower house to launch an experiment for the unification of the interests of the nobility and the bourgeoisie. Kölcsey and several leaders of the reformist liberals including Kossuth realized that the bourgeoisie had no representation and that was why they were orientating towards the court.

Nearly a year before the convocation of the 1843 diet, Kossuth interpreted the urban question as follows:

What does it mean to be a constitutional citizen in Hungary? Answer: to partake of the right of "nothing about us without us." That means that a Hungarian nobleman may

¹⁴ Kölcsey (1832–1833), 50.

¹⁵ Kölcsey (1832–1833), 58. See also, Ferenc Deák (1903), 1:258–260.

profess to be a constitutional citizen in the full sense of the word. And what makes him feel so? The county structure, where he finds the support for his “nothing about him without him” right. With that, his constitutionality is turned into reality, otherwise it would remain dead letter ... Is the town dweller a constitutional citizen in this country, or not? In theory, we must say “yes” because it is written that the town dwelling burghers are the fourth estate; but in practice, we must say “no” because there is no place or way where and how the town dweller could partake of his right of “nothing about us without us.” For him, the constitution is a dead letter. Let us transform it into reality: when we are calling for reforms, we should mystify neither him nor ourselves. What alone can turn the case of free town dwellers into reality is their participation in the “nothing about them without them” right. This, in turn, cannot be achieved in accord with the Hungarian constitutional political system, unless they receive assemblies of the same jurisdiction as the nobility has in the counties ... To exclude someone from the blessings of constitutional life is an injustice, but to pretend to admit him amidst empty mystifications is also mockery.¹⁶

The liberal reformers’ proposal, that the increase in the number of town votes in the diet should be linked up with the transformation of the urban municipal structure, was turned down indirectly by the conservative majority of the upper house. It did so by massively reducing the circle of those eligible for the city council and the representation of the town, and proposing to set centrally appointed general inspectors to control local politics (nominally as supervisors). The standpoint of the upper house conservatives was not simply the application of the census by wealth but also an expression of maintaining or reviving the dependence of the towns on the superior authority. There were dissenting opinions about defining the scope of the inspectors’ authority, hence no agreement was reached between the two dietal houses and no law was passed about the dietal representation of cities, or their reform. Since the upper house did not consent to real self-government for the towns, no real representation could emerge for the urban municipalities controlled from above.

¹⁶ [Lajos Kossuth], “Még egy szó a sz[abad] kir[áyi] városokról [One more word about the free royal towns],” *PH*, July 31, 1842; cf. idem, “Városi belszerkezet [Inner structure of towns],” *PH*, July 17, 1842; idem, “Még egy-két ok [Another reason or two],” *PH*, Aug. 4, 1842; idem, “Egy új lépés a városok ügyében [A new step for the towns],” *PH*, Oct. 9, 1842; idem, “Ismét egy új lépés a városok ügyében [Yet another step for the towns],” *PH*, Feb. 9, 1843; idem, “Kir[áyi] városi szavazatarány [Quota of votes for the royal towns],” *PH*, Feb. 26, and Mar. 2, 1843; idem, “Városi polgárjog és honoráciorok [Political rights of towns and the non-noble intellectuals],” *PH*, Mar. 26, 1843; idem, “Polgárkategóriák [Middle-class categories],” *PH*, Mar. 30, 1843; idem, “Két ellenvélemény [Two counter arguments],” *PH*, Apr. 6, 1843; idem, “Cenzus [Census],” *PH*, Apr. 9, 1843; idem, “Városi követek az országgyűlésen [Representatives of towns in the diet],” *PH*, May 11, 1843. See also, Szabad (1977), 79–83.

The differences between the conservative and liberal positions on the urban question are well illustrated by the main arguments adduced in the lower house debate on September 26, 1844. In his below cited contribution, Ede Zsedényi argued against the liberal deputies of Csongrád and Bihar counties, Gábor Klauzál and Ödön Beöthy. Several deputies added comments including István Bezerédy, delegate of Tolna county, who had been epitomized as “the representative of the eternal Truth” by his fellows. The topic of contention was the authority of the town inspectors and their right to appoint aldermen. Zsedényi argued:

I refuse to accept the thesis of the deputy of Bihar saying that the administrator could not have rights. The judge is the only civil servant who only has duties but has no rights; he is also endowed with rights for their duties. Csongrád's deputy has announced that if the right of appointment is assigned to the civil servant, the whole town will fall victim to arbitrariness and regulation won't be worth a straw. As for me, I respect the inspectorial office as the shield of permanence, and therefore I hold that without the right of appointment, the inspector will be a puppet. It cannot be feared that there will be misuse of the authority of appointment. We are living at a time when the public opinion can assert itself, as the deputy and *alispán* [vice lord-lieutenant] of Bihar have proven. The delegate of Csongrád promised to support my proposal if I did accept the responsibility of the government. Sparkling words. Why is responsibility not proposed where it should be—in the counties—and why do you want to impose something on some people that you yourself would gladly keep aloof of?¹⁷

Efficiency of the executive power, law, and order—these were the key concepts of Zsedényi's reasoning. Kölcsey's and Kossuth's insights were represented by the leaders of the liberal reformers at the diet. The dietal dispute over the urban question—just as the polemics about the county issue—involved radically different interpretations of the relationship between government and diet, implying different views on whether the government officials were masters or servants of the state, and whether the state was responsible to anybody.

Failure of the Diet: Their Interpretations

When the diet was adjourned in the autumn of 1844, the deputies of the lower house passed a motion of non-confidence. They condemned the government for failing to implement article 1836:21, the reincorporation of *Partium*.¹⁸ Actually, there was far more at stake. The question was who

¹⁷ Ferenc Kovács (1894), 6:113.

¹⁸ Literally “Partium,” collective name for three counties and a castle near Debrecen, annexed from the Kingdom of Hungary to Transylvania in 1542. From 1715/1741 it be-

to blame for the obstruction of the enactment of several hundred reform proposals including the partial introduction of shared taxation, the transformation of the industrial, commercial, and tariff policies, modernization of the criminal jurisdiction, and the restructuring of dietal representation and the municipal layout of the towns. The motion of non-confidence by the lower house blamed the government for the failure of the innovations and the reforms of the diet.¹⁹

Adopting Deák's views of 1839/40, the lower house deputies of the liberal reformers maintained—after the pattern of the “good king, bad advisers” platitude—that the person of the sovereign was sacrosanct, but the government's activity was not beyond criticism at all. It was responsible to the legislation, and if the trust of the diet in the government were shaken, the king would have to dismiss it and appoint an executive body that enjoyed the trust of the legislative majority.²⁰ Thereby, the opposition having the majority in the lower house, most of whose reform proposals had been obstructed, connected the consequences of their failure with the conclusions of the trials of high treason. Their goal was the transformation of the *ancient* constitution into a modern liberal one. This concluded with the symbolic power of the head of state, standing for the temporal continuity of statehood, instead of for his personal authority; executive power responsible to the diet instead of a government appointed through the absolute power of the monarch; popular sovereignty instead of power exercised by divine grace; public will represented by the majority of the legislation instead of the royal will; and the bourgeois constitutional forms of the separation of powers instead of the concentration of power. This was the liberal challenge represented by the majority of the elected body of the diet.

The conservative response was quite peculiar. If the opposition has majority in the lower house, reforms cannot be put through, for the em-

longed to the Hungarian kingdom *de jure* but *de facto* continued to be part of Transylvania, which—as a serious grievance—remained a permanent demand of the opposition until the union with Transylvania in 1848, and resumed after the neo-absolutist period in 1867. The peace treaties of Trianon (1920) and Paris (1947) annexed it, together with entire Transylvania, to Romania. See, Bérenger, Kecskeméti (2005), Romsics (2001, 2006).

¹⁹ *Ogy.-i irományok*, (1843/44), 4:17, 71–72, 81, 87–88; cf. Horváth (1886), 2:458–460, Ballagi (1897), 567–607, and Vörös (1980a), bk. 2:920–921.

²⁰ Ferenc Kovács (1894), 6:408–409, 485–489, 505–508. Cf. Ferenc Deák (1903), 1:147–148, 255–258. The immemorial platitude of “good king, wicked advisers” was the ideological source of ministerial responsibility. See also, Szabad (1986).

bodiment of law and order above parties, the government, does not tolerate factional strife, and the unity of the empire is incompatible with the dismissal of the government. The opposition has a negative character, it is obstructive, not constructive, and therefore a pro-government majority must be created in the lower house. Any situation in which the government and the lower house can be confronted must be eliminated—by replacing the majority of the lower house and not the government.

This thesis was formed during the conservative offensive of 1845–47 by Emil Dessewffy, Antal Szécsen, and Sándor Liphay. Their polemics presenting a row of theses and the underlying government measures responded directly to the motion of non-confidence.²¹

In his article, entitled “Disillusion,” Kossuth warned as early as 1843 that new tools and venues would have to be added to the old ones in the interest of the reform. He directed the attention of the liberal reformers to social matters, the social associations rallying both nobles and non-nobles.²² Eötvös kept offering propositions to the government supposing that the imperial government was in support of economic, social, and political progress in Hungary. He thought that all the government needed were fresh ideas—which he provided in secret—to put into practice the much-desired innovations.²³ Antal Szécsen and Emil Dessewffy wrote articles in *Budapesti Híradó*, the successor to *Világ*. They blamed the opposition for the failure of the diet and urged for a pro-government diet majority. As a result of maneuvers by the government organs, *Pesti Hírlap* became the forum of the reform group led by Eötvös, called the centralists, in the summer of 1844.²⁴

In the last debates of the lower house, only Zsedényi argued openly against the liberal reformers’ motion of non-confidence, the rest of the conservative deputies shunned the question without declaring themselves. Zsedényi, the deputy of Szepes, charged that the liberal deputies putting forth the motion plucked on emotional strings, and carried away with passion, ignoring the conditions under which reforms were to be carried out in Hungary. It was therefore inevitable that they would fail to get the innovations sanctioned, which, in turn, would cause their isolation from the

²¹ On the journalism of the conservative offensive, see the next chapter.

²² [Lajos Kossuth], “Kiábrándulás [Disappointment],” *PH*, Dec. 7, 1843.

²³ On József Eötvös’ memorandum to Metternich, his relationship with the government, and his illusions about it, see Varga (1980–1981), 2:176–189, cf. Bártfai (1943), 2:465, 480–486, 490, 506.

²⁴ Varga (1980–1981), 2:176–189.

public and earn them unpopularity. The emotional approach degraded a statesman, he claimed, for the lack of respect for political authority could trigger off a chain reaction of irresponsibility; impotence could incense the public against the legislation and establish a precedent for the government, and if the diet did not respect the government, the latter would not respect the diet either.

Thus Zsedényi laid the blame on the opposition for emotional politics, neglect of realities, and the failure of the diet. His disputants immediately pinpointed the basis of the above argumentation: the identification of law with government, and constitutionality with executive power. The law must be respected, they declared, whereas respect was only due to the government when it deserved it. This government had, however, obstructed the reforming activity of the legislature and failed to enforce the law 1836:21, which stipulated the reincorporation of the Parts—the Partium between Hungary and Transylvania—to Hungary. The government therefore was not worthy of respect and could even be suspected of being incapable of protecting the constitution and enforcing the innovations. Consequently, the remaining guarantees of constitutionality—the county system and the right of the lower house to propose reforms—had to be protected even more vehemently. Those who committed themselves to the government, which kept its principles and goals concealed, also sold their conscience by taking a government office. These were the counter-arguments of Ödön Beöthy, Gábor Klauzál, and Móric Szentkirályi.²⁵

Zsedényi also voiced bitterness about the postponement of the enactment of the mining law (in which Szepes had special interest), placed in the agenda repeatedly after 1827, for which he put the blame on the government. Concerning the language act and the upper house's statement questioning the right of the lower house to table motions, the conservatives took the side of the liberals. Differences between the two positions were, naturally, still tangible. On the day of the rise of the diet—November 11, 1844—Zsedényi argued:

As I have given evidence at this diet, I do not defend certain sides of the government's activity. The deputy of Bihar must admit, however, that there isn't another country in which the government struggles with so many difficulties in implementing the laws as here where of almost the greater part of the executive power much more belongs to the counties than to the government. It is a real miracle that the struggle of the government with the 52 counties has not worn out the flexibility of the government.

²⁵ Ferenc Kovács (1894), 4:184–195.

Beöthy's answer was friendly bantering:

The honorable deputy says the government has not breached the law ... Some days ago speaking about the Partium you claimed that the government was acting unlawfully ... You were fulminating that the mining law had received no sanction ... I know the honorable deputy sees lots of things in the same way as I do, he just does not say so.²⁶

“Law and order” and the implementation of the laws depended on the counties, which in Ede Zsedényi's view, aggravated the work of the government in setting things right.

After eighteen months, the diet was adjourned by the sovereign. All were aware of the failure but adduced different reasons. The conservatives passed the buck to the opposition, the liberals blamed the government. Many thought that the Vienna government was inclined to reforms, but they were unaware of the fact that the point of Metternich's modernizing efforts was to change the pluralistic character of the aristocratic institutions and turn them in the direction of absolutism. At the diet, the conservatives undertook the role of foiling the liberal initiatives, enhancing the influence of the government, and pushing back the opposition. Their weight at the diet of 1843/44 was not decisive in the lower house, but it was in the upper house. Their arguments could be grouped around the safeguarding of the constitution and the creation of law and order. They played a defensive role. At the turn of 1844/45, the conservatives—inspired by Aurél Dessewffy's memorandum and Metternich's conception—launched an offensive in response to the non-confidence motion, which had a profound influence on the Hungarian political life from 1845–47.

²⁶ Ferenc Kovács (1894), 6:408–409, 485–489, 505–508.

Journalists' Offensive: Issues and Arguments
(1845–1847)

Elevated to key positions, the leaders of the young conservatives, Count György Apponyi and Baron Samu Jósika, mounted an offensive in early 1845 under the slogan of “making law and order” in the counties, and then the diet, in order to restore the prestige of the executive power, the security of the state, and the unity of the empire. More accurately, the target of the attack was to create a pro-government majority in the counties first, and later in the diet to be convoked in 1847. The ultimate aim was to have their ideas enacted by the future majority.

A royal rescript enjoined all lord lieutenants (*főispán*) to control effectively their county; their tasks and competencies were reformulated and their emolument radically increased. This was to ensure that a *főispán* should see to the implementation of the orders of the government organs, despite the county opinion, and primarily to repress the opposition in the county and create a pro-government majority there. Where the *főispán* did not reside in the county, a substitute was appointed, an *administrator*. The number of administrators in the 52 counties nearly doubled in 1846/47. Where there were no substitutes for the *főispán*, the *főispán*—with few exceptions—paved the way for government influence. There were of course counties where it was justified to have substitutes to hold county matters in hand in the absence of the *főispán* who filled some high office: the Palatine in Pest, and the Archbishop of Esztergom in his residential county held this title. Yet the main purpose for the increase in the number of administrators and the replacements of the *főispán* of the county was not the improvement of professional civil service but the political aim of repressing the opposition. The administrators were all conservatives, which clearly reveals what “making law and order” meant.¹

The municipalities were indeed badly in need of reorganization, as the liberal and conservative political writers as well as the speakers at the district meetings of the 1843/44 diet all agreed. The designers of the new structure, however, wished to turn the county into an obedient tool under the slogans of “making order” and “creating efficient public administration,” according to the spirit of the writings of Counts Aurél and Emil

¹ Ballagi (1897), 623–638, Andics (1975), 402–434, (1952–1981), 3:131–141, *Schematismus* (1840–1847), 1:101–112, 2:83–91, 3:97–108, 4:103–114, 5:81–89, 6:88–96, 7:94–104, 8:89–98; cf. Bártfai (1943), 2:487–489.

Dessewffy and Albert Sztáray and the speeches of Ede Zsedényi in the diet. By introducing the new administrative system, György Apponyi and Samu Jósika did not conserve or improve on the Hungarian constitution but made an innovation: drawing the counties of the Hungarian political setup closer to the political structure of the Hereditary Lands which were organized from above.

From the summer of 1844 Kossuth was barred from editing any paper. As we know already, *Pesti Hírlap* became the mouthpiece of the centralists rallied around József Eötvös. From the beginning of the decade, *Erdélyi Híradó* had been contributing to liberal journalism, but now it was losing its weight. The severe restriction of *Hetilap* to economic matters was ensured not only by its official license but first of all by censorship, which kept a close watch on the journal's contributor Kossuth.

Conservative journalism, by contrast, gained strength. Renamed as *Budapesti Híradó*, *Világ* was renewed in the summer of 1844, and *Nemzeti Újság* also passed into a strong editorial hand in early 1845. Emil Dessewffy was the decisive personage in *Budapesti Híradó*, with four issues a week, containing editorials, news of the capital and the counties, foreign press reviews, scientific and literary columns, and advertisements. He wrote most of the editorials, commented on those written by others, and held the paper firmly in his grip. Beside Dessewffy, the profile of the paper owed largely to the intellectuals he had recruited, who reviewed books published abroad, headed the scientific columns, gleaned the other papers of the capital, and took part in polemics. The great majority of articles appeared anonymously and cannot be decisively attributed. *Nemzeti Újság*, also issued four times a week, acquired its new profile from the new chief editor, Sándor Liphay. A countryside landowner and Pest-based lawyer, Liphay, wrote most of the leaders himself. His colleagues included a former contributor to *Világ*, Ferenc Kállay, and some writers of the old conservative staff as well as some young journalists.²

The main topics of conservative political journalism were the critique of capitalism, safeguarding aristocratic constitution, the reinforcement and extension of the guarantees of order, and the advantages of integration in the imperial division of labor. These themes can be reconstructed and

² Emil Dessewffy's political writings, documents of *Budapesti Híradó*, letters, and drafts, MOL, Deslt, Acta Publica. On the background: Staatsarchiv, Vienna, Kabinettsarchiv. Staatskonferenzakten. s. 1844. 193, 212, 634; Kemény (1846), 158, 175. Cf. Bártfai (1943), 2:495–497, 549.

analyzed on the basis of writings by Ferenc Kállay, Sándor Liphay, Antal Szécsen, and Emil Dessewffy.

Western Models and Hungarian Conditions

Regarding the content of *Nemzeti Újság*, Ferenc Kállay writes that the paper “declares first of all the principle that ‘[it] is to be a progressive paper on an aristocratic basis’; in close connection with this axiom is the firmly independent position of the upper house, the only guarantee of which is the landed estate...”³ The following paragraph is a summary of his ideas in two articles from July and August of 1845:

The hostility to the aristocracy can be traced to envy of those in senior offices, the fashionable fallacies of radicalism, the political and social theories of the French Enlightenment, the overgeneralization of personal faults, and the activity of the aristocratic opposition. The fashionable fallacies of radicalism—the abolition of social hierarchy, the sovereignty of the people, human rights, and equality—all repudiate the system of privileges by birth, the aristocratic organization of state and society. Overgeneralization means the transfer of some individual traits to the whole of the aristocracy. However, without an aristocracy anarchy and despotism are impossible to avoid, for only the aristocracy and its state can guard against them. It is the vocation of the aristocracy to lead society, govern the governable. The Hungarian aristocracy—like the English one—is a viable, competent, and legitimate actor of the political life. The independence of the upper house is the basic condition and counterweight to the extension of political rights, and the ascendancy of political incompetence or a revolutionary trend. All reformism must start out from the status quo, aiming to improve it, for “only God can create something out of nothing, man cannot,” and a historically evolving status quo is superior to human intellect. Society is superior to the individual, as faith is superior to reason, for human nature is necessarily sinful, faulty, and defective because of original sin. The ills of society can be alleviated by respect of private law, by legality and righteousness, by strengthening the hierarchy, the religious sentiments, and the authority of the government, but the ills themselves cannot be eliminated, only moderated. The specific issues of the reform must be adapted to the Hungarian constitution, and not vice versa, adapt-

³ K[állay] F[erenc], “A Nemzeti Újság [National Gazette],” *NU*, July 18, 1845. Cf. K[állay] F[erenc], “Nyílt levél [Open letter],” *NU*, Aug. 25, 1845.

ing the constitution to the reforms. The estate of the nobility and the clergy is not a privileged estate because belonging to it cannot be bought but is the gift of divine providence, as is the landed estate and noble origin, and the power and authority that they imply. The aristocracy elevates the members of society whom they find worthy. The earlier difficulties of this process are not to be blamed on the institutions, for they were the outcome of abuses or misunderstandings (human frailties), they are an excessive outgrowth and not roots. The necessary reforms—the possibility to hold office and possess land as well as the duty of taxation—can and must be introduced without harming the foundations of the constitution.

Ferenc Kállay's summarized theses have constituted the program of *Nemzeti Újság*, with aristocratic progression, the independence of the upper house, and the large estate as the guarantees for participation in politics. The reasoning reminds one of Sándor Liphay's article of 1843, its outlook is similar to Albert Sztáray's social concept, and the role is reminiscent of the defense of the aristocratic constitution. In addition to the postulation of the necessity and validity of the social hierarchy, original sin plays a decisive role in the thinking of this member of the Hungarian Scholarly Society.

Two months later, in the autumn of 1845, Ferenc Kállay presented and interpreted the English, French, Prussian, and North American political circumstances and constitutional conditions in a series of articles.⁴ Similarly to the "Critique of the proclamation," he described the constitutional relations abroad chiefly on the basis of Prussian conservative authors. The following paragraph is a summary of the main theses in the series of articles:

The aristocratic conservative constitutionality is characterized by organic, rather than rational, features. It is not the separation of powers but their mixture and fusion that characterizes the running of the English constitutional institutions. The center of governing is not the parliament alone but the monarch and the two houses of parliament together. The repository of the constitution is not the parliament alone, but it permeates the whole state. At the same time, the monarchy is not only represented by the king, the aristocracy by the upper house, or democracy by the lower house. The extremely high number of English laws suggests a more chaotic state than the

⁴ F[erenc] K[állay], "Jellemrajzok az alkotmányos élet s kormányrendszerek köréből [Character sketches from constitutional life and government systems]," pts. 1 and 2, "Anglia [England]," pts. 3 and 4, "Franciaország [France]," *NU*, Sept. 7, 9, 11, and 12, 1845; idem, "A porosz liberálisok [The Prussian liberals]," and *NU*, Oct. 9, 1845; idem, "Északamerikai állapotok [North American conditions]," pts. 1 and 2, *NU*, Oct. 21 and 23, 1845.

Hungarian. The training and moral education of the lower strata, the relationship of the Church of England with the other denominations, and the sanitary conditions await solutions. The English localizing trend is the opposite of the French centralizing system. The local interests can be decided at the local level in England. Public services are free in the United Kingdom, unlike in France.⁵ In distinction to Great Britain, France did not have a free constitution until Louis XVIII's Charta, thus the absolute power of the monarch counteracted the municipal system. Feudal peasantry survived up to the revolution in several places. The period of the revolution and Napoleon was dominated by despotism. In earlier times the French state was monarchic-democratic and merit mixed with the landed aristocracy, caste-like segregation being wholly missing. The modern French state is built on the reign of public opinion, corruption, and party politics under the pretext of popular sovereignty, centralization, and the fiction of majority rule, which is untenable and causes moral decay and imbalance. In short, it is an appalling example of rule by sheer number.⁶ The desirable government is not to be the outcome of consensus but of the moral unity of sovereign and nation. It is possible to evade a general agreement, for if the government is strong, it will adapt the areas not subject to bargaining to itself, or it may reinterpret and change the agreement, while on the other hand, the bargain may hinder the pursuit and protection of liberty. The pursuit of liberty is hindered by the government's incapacity to regulate it, its protection is marred by the government's hands being tied in foreign relations as well. The representative system presses the government to win the majority, which results inevitably in corruption. In Prussia, the basis for vocational representation in the provincial diets is the landed estate, the guarantee for moral weight. The intellectuals disown their own profession if they do not rest content with their occupation and poke their nose into politics.⁷

Ferenc Kállay described the English situation on the basis of works by Bülow and Hallam, the French one by Raynouard, Limnaeus, Wachsmuth, and Pasquier, and the German situation mainly by Jarcke and Heinrich Leo.⁸ For the presentation of the North American conditions, he used

⁵ F[erenc] K[állay], "England," pts. 1 and 2.

⁶ F[erenc] K[állay], "France," pts. 3 and 4.

⁷ F[erenc] K[állay], "The Prussian liberals."

⁸ Bülow (1832, 1841), Hallam (1818, 1827), Raynouard (1829), Limnaeus (1655), Pasquier (1893–1894), vol. 1, Wachsmuth (1844), Jarcke (1822, 1824, 1839–1854), Bülow-Cummerow (1845), Leo (1835–1856, 1857, 1948). The most of the works were identified with the help of Mrs. Zsigmond Ritoók, née Ágnes Szalay (MTAKK), for which I owe her my deep gratitude.

Raumer's book.⁹ He claimed that in the wake of Sándor Bölöni Farkas,¹⁰ a Hungarian author of an influential travelogue concerning his experiences in the United States in the 1830s, a one-sided view had spread of the United States; Tocqueville and Chevalier only looked at the American situation from a single aspect, whereas Raumer approached it with a broad view.¹¹ In his opinion, Raumer was also partial towards the United States, but nevertheless his data could be used to banish the illusions surrounding that country. In the enormous territory there were few people, therefore communication was being developed at an unprecedented pace. This acknowledgement is paired with many condemning remarks. In Kállay's view, the main traits of the North Americans were enviousness of prosperity, as well as vanity and snobbery. The inhabitants were immersed in earthly goods, politics, the papers, and had no time left for serious science and art, which the republican state hindered anyway. The rich could not enjoy their wealth, being forced to conceal it. The uneducated kept the educated under their thumb; prominence, true nobility, and the aristocracy had no chance in America where quantity reigns over quality. Beside the condemnation of the republic and democracy, Kállay only touched on slavery in general terms, but he reproached the northern states for partyism, shopkeeper mentality, and the support of the protective tariff. Protectionism—he declared obviously hinting at the Hungarian situation—only favored the rich and ruined the poor. The southern states were against the protective tariff, the northern states insisted on it.¹²

In a series of articles from 1845, Kállay, the adversary of constitutional government and apologist for the autocratic Russian Empire, tried to dissociate the English conditions from the image of the paragon of a liberal establishment; he branded the French correlations, and proclaimed Prussian absolutism as the course to be adopted, while severely condemning the North American political life for its democratic character. For him, the polar opposites were French constitutionality and the Prussian state, the rule of numbers based on consensus, as the negative example, and the moral unity of the governors and the governed, as the positive model.

⁹ Raumer (1845).

¹⁰ Farkas Sándor Bölöni (b. 1795 in Bölön, d. 1842 in Kolozsvár) was a Transylvanian liberal jurist, friend of Miklós Wesselényi, and secretary of the Kolozsvár theater. In 1830–31, he traveled in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, England, and the United States. His *Journey in North America* brought him fame, but his complete travelogue and diary were only published long after his death.

¹¹ Bölöni (1834), Julius (1839), Tocqueville (1837–1840), and Chevalier (1837).

¹² F[erenc] K[állay], "North American conditions."

Kállay's perception of foreign countries was not simply determined by the authors he read and what the works elaborated. It also relied fundamentally on his belief in the only possible social and state organization being that of sovereign and his subjects, as well as on the traditional conservative concept of society and state, on the ideology of the aristocracy as the leading stratum of society, and the absolutist governance of the state. Kállay's views of foreign countries reminds one of Albert Sztáray's unconcealed conservatism: "The constitutional monarchies must be built on the aristocracy, which relies on the estate, and with its decline the monarchy must evidently fall, since no element concordant with the principle of monarchy survives."¹³

Kállay similarly supported the idea that the landowning aristocracy was the support of the monarchy, and these two were interlocked with each other. Commenting further, he thought that the false doctrine of the sharing of the estate would lead to its subdivision, the increase in the number of inhabitants in an estate, and eventually to the diminution of landed property. The diminution of the estate would deny the division of labor, as small plots force tenants to work for subsistence, being incapable of producing for the market. When fallow land, swamps, and moorland were turned into arable land, when the people of the northern counties no longer starved, when the population increased so much that industry could absorb people without detriment to agriculture, then would it be possible to think of industrialization. The subdivision of the estate would not only dramatically decrease the source of living of the peasantry, but the credit possibilities of the middle class would also shrink. The disintegration of the landed property relations would entail the disintegration of family relations. Equality by law and the prospect of enrichment would have great appeal to the people, and thus artisans would leave their workshops to acquire lands, the exchange of goods being stymied, and the nation would become indebted to foreign countries. Burdens would be increased, resources depleted, and dissatisfaction enhanced. In Kállay's above diagnosis, the subdivision of an estate would halt trade and generate misery and social dissatisfaction. In defense of the large estate, Ferenc Kállay listed the consequences of its subdivision as he saw it: the freezing of trade, impoverishment of society, and prevalence of dearth—caused by the fiction of legal equality and the hunger for wealth. His positive alternative is again the paternalist, vocational social organization as revealed in his opinion of foreign countries. His outlook was basically agrarian

¹³ F[erenc] K[állay], "Birtok [Landed estate]," *NU*, May 18, 1845.

discarding the course of industrialization, thus his writings were in line with the articles of Count Albert Sztáray.

Kállay published an article in *Nemzeti Újság* in the spring of 1847 about the seamy side of the manufacturing industry, with figures on the misery of the working class. Relying on Engels' *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, he warned against hopes placed in industrialization. Ferenc Kállay cited Engels' work to justify his agrarian conservative position. He used his figures to illustrate that capitalism and industrialization brought about worse consequences than the continuation of feudalism.¹⁴ In accord with a twenty-eight-part article series in *Budapesti Híradó*, entitled "Our situation and the most urgent reforms," Kállay depicted the drawbacks of capitalism from the vantage point of the rejection of industrial progress rather than suggestions for their elimination. He polarized and dramatized some of their features, using Engels' book to this effect. He was convinced that social ills could only be mitigated but not resolved, for owing to origin sin inequality was unavoidable both in politics and in society, as it was the fundamental determinative of human nature.¹⁵

In another two-part article, "Proclamation," Kállay confronted the peculiarities of liberal and conservative politics. His axiom was that ideals and principles of divine origin were beyond man's capacity, so man had better restrict his attention to empirical features on the basis of practical principles. The differences of constitutions and governments were not by chance but resulted from different circumstances of history, ethnicity, customs, climate, degree of maturity, and neighbors. Consequently, instead of uniformizing general norms and speculative principles, the reforms had to start out from concrete constitutions and forms of government.

¹⁴ F[erenc] K[állay], "A dolgozó néposztály állapota Angliában jelen társadalmi állásunkhoz intéleg fölmutatva [The state of the working class in England, presented as a warning to our present day society]," pts. 1 and 2, *NU*, Apr. 30 and May 4, 1847. Precedents: F[erenc] K[állay], "Visszhang a majorátusok ügyében [Reflection on primogeniture]," pts. 1 and 2, *NU*, Mar. 6 and 8, 1846; F[erenc] K[állay], "Pauperizmus [Pauperism]," pts. 1 and 2, *NU*, Mar. 10 and 12, 1846. Pál Pándi (1972, 1:238–239), who interpreted the two-part article in the 1960s and 70s, threw into relief the fact that Kállay presented Engels' work, ignoring the context in which Kállay had done so, whereas the context clearly reveals that he was a feudal anti-capitalist. See, Engels (1846/1892). Cf. Lukácsy Sándor, "Engels első magyar olvasói [The first Hungarian readers of Engels]," *Valóság*, 1961; Pándi Pál, "Az első hazai találkozás Engelsszel [The first encounter with Engels in Hungary]," *Élet és Irodalom*, Jan. 18, 1964.

¹⁵ F[erenc] K[állay], "The state of the working class in England," pts. 1 and 3.

Our status quo is the surviving constitutional life handled by the Hungarian sovereign together with the estates of the realm; the task is therefore to design the slow and hard road of the transformation of these in order that the surviving and so far operative interests should be protected and the new ones should derive from them.¹⁶

Kállay deemed that one state might learn from another, but not through imposing innovations by force. Changes had to be organic and not follow a mechanical adoption of a model. Hungary, as part of a large empire, could not rend itself in order to have a government after the French pattern, for neither the imperial government—to prevent the separation of its various lands—nor the majority of the diet would consent to it. Since it could not be achieved peacefully, violence would cause more violence, so a representative government was unrealizable in Hungary.

Kállay argued that since Hungary was a multinational country with a “mottled compound of peoples,” and the task of the Magyarization of foreign ethnicities was ensured quietly by wise laws, their effect should not be hindered by political turmoil. Turmoil was caused by domestic discord resulting from agitation against the true representatives of the ancient Hungarian constitution (higher clergy and aristocracy). The basis for reforms, as the conservative party declared, was the constitutional power and validity of the government, the constitutional status quo, the moderating influence of the estates, the sanctity of property, and the stability of relations with the empire. These were the interests of the nation that should survive intact and be reinforced in the future, which, in turn, were contingent upon all reform initiatives starting from the status quo.

Kállay wanted the conservatives to launch an intellectual offensive to refute the pamphlets of the opposition in order to separate the more mature oppositionists and win them over to the conservative side. He feared that the goals of the opposition—centralization, representative government based on the French model, an omnipotent diet, and abolition of instructions to the deputies as cited in Eötvös’ *Reform*—might gain popularity for want of refutation, whereas they were impossible to carry out. Instead of jeopardizing foreign relations, existing interests, and conditions, the Hungarian nation should strive peacefully and quietly to perfect its own inner strength.

It was part of the assault on the large estates, he claimed, that the opposition wanted to compensate the landowners with money for some redeemed land, whereas money was never as safe a guarantee as land. There were no conditions for the redemption of the feudal obligations of the

¹⁶ F[erenc] K[állay], “Szózat [Proclamation],” pts. 1 and 2, *NU*, Mar. 7 and 9, 1847.

peasants or the abolition of *aviticitas*, and these moves would endanger the foundations of the constitution, first of all the large estate. It was not the harmful and unfeasible ideal of equal happiness on earth but the practical measures that would improve the life of the common people: better taxation, prevention of Jewish machinations, easier jurisdiction, implantation of means promoting material well-being, mental development, improvement of public institution, and first of all religious and moral education. He maintained that trial by jury, bill of exchange, unlimited popular representation, and attacks on the large estate had to be countered with the legalized right to possession and office, permanent law courts, and the responsibility of judges through the simplification of legal codes and procedures. A constitution honored over centuries could not be transformed with impunity in an improvisatory manner.

In the spring of 1847, Ferenc Kállay collated the statutes of the new conservative party with the pamphlets of the opposition and offered a separate interpretation of the redemption of the peasants' obligations:¹⁷

The Hungarian nation has been attached to *aviticitas* for centuries, so legislators must take care not to undermine or uproot our nation by abolishing *aviticitas*; the only possibility to abolish it is passing a law that—free selling and buying being introduced with the abolition of *aviticitas*—alien elements shall not be allowed to purchase Hungarian land, for otherwise it could easily end in hands that only grab at profit but ignore the elevation of the nation.¹⁸

He asserted that the preconditions for the abolition of *aviticitas* and the redemption of feudal obligations should include the regulation of legal proceedings and judicial responsibility, permanent law courts, land registration, credit institutions, and the regulation of Jewish speculations.¹⁹

Kállay's nation saving arguments, concerning *aviticitas* and his value judgement apparent in the confrontation of the landowner and the intellectual, resemble Antal Szécsen's position on the question of primogeniture and his article on non-noble intellectuals (*honoratiores*).

Kállay's segregating views on the "Jewish question" are concordant with the writings signed by "Baricz" in *Világ* in 1843/44.²⁰ Foreign elements cannot be co-opted into the nation by extending rights to them,

¹⁷ F[erenc] K[állay], "Örökváltság [Redemption]," pts. 1–6, *NU*, May 20, 23, 28, June 1, 4, and 8, 1847.

¹⁸ F[erenc] K[állay], "Redemption," pt. 3.

¹⁹ F[erenc] K[állay], "Redemption," pt. 3.

²⁰ F[erenc] K[állay], "Zsidó ügy [The Jewish issue]," pts. 1–7, *NU*, July 30, Aug. 3, 8, 12, 17, 22, and 27, 1847.

"Baricz" claimed, free from the illusion of the assimilating power of the extension of rights but also free from an intention of broadening the body politic. During the dietal dispute on the legal status of the Jews, he recommended mistrust rather than confidence toward Jewry. His solution to the question was the christening of the Jews instead of their emancipation.²¹ Chief rabbi Löw Schwab responded to the ideas of "Baricz" in *Világ*.²²

There were fierce discussions about the emancipation of Jews at the 1843/44 diet. They were laden with repudiation based on prejudice, even more with selfish rejection for fear of a potential commercial or industrial rival. In the lower house, several deputies of the towns argued in this vein supporting the conservatives Ede Zsedényi and György Mailáth. The liberal deputies of Zemplén and Komárom counties also took a conservative position on the issue of Jewish emancipation. The liberal position was relentlessly represented by Ödön Beöthy, Gábor Klauzál, István Bezerédy, László Palóczy, Mór Perczel, Móric Szentkirályi, and Sebő Vukovics.²³ The conservative standpoint was taken by Antal Szécsen and István Széchenyi in the upper house, where they proved small-minded on several issues of safeguarding privileges.²⁴ The diet of 1843/44 eventually failed to enact the emancipation of Jews.

In his article series in *Nemzeti Újság* published in summer 1847, Ferenc Kállay argued for the conversion of Jews. Owing to a past spent in subjugation, and to the effects of the Talmud, he claimed, the Jewry had become degenerate and parasitic. The customs of the Jews separated them from the Christians, and they used mixed marriages to turn the Christians into Jews. Kállay had in mind that if the land was tilled by the Jewish owner or his Jewish laborers, Jews should also be allowed to buy land, and their taxation should also be eased, but speculation would have to be banned and they should be forced to go to Christian schools. In Kállay's

²¹ Baricz [Ferenc Kállay], "Idegen elem és nemzetiség [Alien elements and nationality]," *V*, 25 Nov. 1843; Baricz [Ferenc Kállay], "Zsidó ügy [The Jewish issue]," pts. 1 and 2, *V*, Feb. 3, 1844.

²² Cf. also Baricz [Ferenc Kállay], "Germán faj [The German race]," pts. 1–3, *V*, Jan. 6, 10, and 13, 1844. Only a negative outcome is arrived at after the analysis of content and style: I think the author was not Gheorge Barițiu. Leó Schwab, "Néhány védszó az izraelita ügyben [A few words of defense regarding the Jewish issue]," *V*, June 19, 1844. Cf. Kecskeméti (1989), (2008), 156–184 and Komlós (2008), 22–36.

²³ Ferenc Kovács (1894), 2:545–558, 3:356–362, 4:184–209, 6:6–23, 121–126, 272–273, 327–330. See Kecskeméti (1989), (2008), 156–184.

²⁴ *FN* (1843/1844), 6:303–312.

view the commandments of Moses were observed by the Christians, for Jews adopted the Talmud. In England and France they could be emancipated because they were few, but in Hungary their populace was large and they were isolated, so they had to be converted to Christianity first.²⁵

In Kállay's interpretation, the disintegrating and restructuring Hungarian Jewry was an undifferentiated whole. On the basis of the traditional medieval prejudice, he evaluated with incomprehension and hostile feelings the stigmatized Jews, who were pushed to the bottom of society and humiliated in their dignity. It was a sign of parasitic behavior and antipathy to the surrounding society, in Kállay's view, that those on the periphery tried to create a modern bourgeois existence under their limited and suppressed circumstances. His view partly fed on the northeastern Hungarian anti-Semitism, a mixture of the hatred of the landowners by the poor and resentment toward the "upstarts," but primarily it fed on the negative evaluation of the process of capitalism.

Kállay identified the nation with the nobility, and thought that the desirable statehood was the constitutional monarchy modeled by Prussian absolutism, as against majority rule based on popular sovereignty. He defined social mobility as the process of rise by merit on the model of ennoblement. The positive pattern of social organization was the stratification of the Christian state predominated by the hierarchy and aristocracy. He was explicitly supportive of the large estate, and named religious moral education and jurisdiction as the guarantees of law and order. For him, the reform was tantamount to perfecting the aristocratic constitution and the system of privileges, for the state was the ordained master of the governed, and the aristocracy was its natural ruling elite. The rule of the best was better than the rule of numbers, aristocracy was better than democracy, which caused disorder, despotism, and corruption. To be followed was Prussian absolutist paternalism instead of popular representation and the representative government of the French, for the aristocracy based on the landed estate was superior to the oligarchy or the intellectuals, let alone the common people. His anthropological pessimism and organic approach to state and society were paired with the acceptance of Hungary's integration in the empire. The writer argued against the redemption of the peasants' feudal obligations and against the abolition of *aviticitas*, in order to guarantee that the lands would remain in national (i.e., noble) hands.

It was in support of the platform of the conservative party, and in opposition to the liberal reformists, that Ferenc Kállay mobilized his unusu-

²⁵ F[erenc] K[állay], "The Jewish issue," pts. 1–7. Cf. Kecskeméti (1989), (2008) 156–184.

ally broad readings used for his manuscript on constitutional law censored a decade earlier. With their help, he outlined a critical and negative picture of the achievements, drawbacks, and perspectives of modernization, fueled with his inner conviction and inexhaustible energies. His experiences as a Transylvanian military judge and perhaps the ban on his constitutional theory work were contributory to his political writings. He wrote for *Nemzeti Újság*, which was not accidental, for he could disseminate his traditional conservative views as the theoretician of an editorial board who embraced the cause of the throne, the altar, and the constitution. His position echoed in an international comparison de Bonald's concepts of state, while in Hungarian conservatism those of Sándor Liphay, Albert Sztáray, and Antal Szécsen.

Constitutionalism

The theoretical articles of *Nemzeti Újság* were written by Ferenc Kállay and chief editor Sándor Liphay. Although they shared a devout conservatism, their approaches varied.

Nemzeti Újság was devoted to the protection of "the throne, the altar, and the constitution" and connected the critique of capitalism with the protection of the aristocratic political structure. Kállay undertook the task of criticizing modern bourgeois developments, while Liphay mainly addressed the defense of the aristocratic constitution and the interpretation of the basic questions of monarchic-feudal legitimacy. Endorsing theoretical erudition and competence, Liphay rejected the ideas of the Enlightenment and liberalism, especially in view of society and statehood. Liphay's affinity with the ideas of Aurél Dessewffy is clear from the following passage:

The prejudices that have attracted so much following in our century ... originate exclusively from the superficiality and confusion of the minds ... To which the steps were provided by the encyclopedists, the cartoons of the philanthropists, the colors of the heroes of the ancient virtues dazzled by Voltaire's and Rousseau's agitation, and the brush by the actual events of the political history of the past two and a half decades ... The personification of this image is constantly confronting us as a small fraction of one of the political sects of our country.²⁶

For three years, the overwhelming majority of editorials in *Nemzeti Újság* (some 650 total, at three to four weekly) were written by Sándor Liphay.

²⁶ [Sándor Liphay], "Bűnlajstrom [List of offences]," *NU*, Jan. 3, 1845.

His writings reveal the influence of Edmund Burke's reflections on the French revolution—probably known in Friedrich Gentz's translation—and the works of Friedrich Karl von Savigny, Louis de Bonald, Adam Müller, Karl Ludwig von Haller, as well as Aurél Dessewffy's and Albert Sztáray's writings.²⁷ The conceptual clue of his thoughts was the shifting of feudal municipalism and the traditional gravaminalist protection of the constitution through loyalty to the court. The below-summarized conceptual core of the writings was gleaned from his verbose, stylistically uneven, and badly composed articles crammed with redundant details. The following paragraphs are an outline of his significant ideas:

In the politics of the Hungarian liberal reformers, Liphay declared, the ancient privileges are equated with prejudice, the inherited institutions are insufficient, past and future are separable, proprietary right based on the possession of land is condemnable by reason, the traditional hierarchy of society is to be gauged by human rights, and the intention of the supreme power of the state is suspicious. Why is that so, he asked, when the goals of the Enlightenment and liberalism were and are perfectly erroneous, since the nature and abilities of human beings are not equal, and hence liberty, equality, and the greatest happiness for the greatest number are impossible to realize? His answer was that politics is namely the field of reality (and not of creation), and over the centuries the real potentialities laid the basis for public law—the constitution—which is an organic formation and cannot be attacked with impunity, as its stability is the basis of the political life. The advocates of majority rule force humanity to make efforts in vain and cast the agitated masses into the arms of absolutism or the lack of a constitution, since the rule of the majority is impossible to realize, nor is its realization desirable.²⁸

Continuing this line of thought, he stated that it is unrealizable because it is absurd that millions be present in politics simultaneously, and it is undesirable because politics requires mental maturity, which is not possessed by the majority. As the balanced evolution of England proves, intellectual maturity is ensured by the possession of the landed estate. The growing demand for constitutionality with the spread of discoveries and technical innovations indicates the desire to extend the self-government, which is not to be viewed with aversion but with lenience, if it remains in

²⁷ Burke (1790, 1793, 1990), Haller (1816–1817), Bonald (1818), Savigny (1840), and Müller (1931). On De Bonald's views, see Ludassy (1984), 85, 150. See also, Powis (1984).

²⁸ [Sándor Liphay], "List of offences."

concord with the constitutional foundations. The West European cases of majority rule are failures, and the English example of aristocratic politics and the Hungarian constitution are all pointing in the same direction, i.e., toward reforms and changes built on the stability of the constitutional relations. The more so, as there is not a single noteworthy factor in the Hungarian public life that does not see its need. The failures of the reform initiatives so far have all stumbled on the policies of the liberal reformers, which aim at subverting the foundations of constitutionality and confusing the specialties and constitutional law. Liphay's solution to the problem was, naturally, that the government and the upper house act against this trend—which ignores them—because it is inadmissible that the landowning aristocracy be eliminated and democracy introduced.²⁹

In his view, the aristocracy of wealth and politically reckless intellectuals have joined forces to introduce democracy, wishing to realize their own oligarchic ambitions under the pretext of majority rule. The Hungarian constitution is, however, aristocratic, and political activity is reserved for the nobility. According to his characterizations, it is a nuisance that landless noblemen have also made it into the domain of aristocratic politics, whereas the criterion of politicizing is the possession of land. The aristocratic constitution of Hungary is untouchable, for the rule of the Hungarian nobility is beyond doubt. In Hungary, there are just a handful of people averse to all change, while the radical democratic party—though predominating the lower house and the county assemblies—does not represent the majority of the Hungarian nobility.³⁰

Liphay maintained that the majority is behind two parties, the moderate aristocratic and the moderate democratic center parties. The government may not form a party, for it represents order above parties, but it may expect its administrators to comply with its wish instead of succumbing to oppositionist popularity. The government may assert its will relying on the two moderate parties, and it is the activation of the center parties

²⁹ [Sándor Liphay], "Írány és tájékozás [Direction and orientation]," *NU*, Jan. 2, 1845; idem, "List of offences." Cf. [Sándor Liphay], "Politikai pártok [Political parties]," *NU*, Jan. 5, 1845; idem, "Felvilágosítás [Enlightening]," *NU*, Jan. 7, 1845. Idem, "Fejlemények [Developments]," pts. 1–6, *NU*, Jan. 12, 14, 16, 17, 19, and 21, 1845. Idem, "Anyagi érdek [Material interest]," pts. 1–3, *NU*, Jan. 26 and 31, 1845; idem, "Eredmény s egybevetés [Outcome and conclusion]," pts. 1 and 2, *NU*, Feb. 4 and 7, 1845.

³⁰ [Sándor Liphay], "Politikai stabilitás [Political stability]," pts. 1 and 2, *NU*, Feb. 9 and 11, 1845; idem, "Politikai stabilitás elve [The principle of political stability]," pts. 1–3, *NU*, Feb. 14, Mar. 11, and 13, 1845; idem, "A teendők alapkérdése [The basic issue of the tasks]," pts. 1 and 2, *NU*, Mar. 14 and 16, 1845.

that the initiatives of the government are conditional upon. The radical democratic party calls for majority rule and universal suffrage, and its illusory goals pave the way to absolutism. The two moderate center parties are competent participants in the political life of the constitutional monarchy, representing social peace and order, minority self-government, and the landed estate.³¹

He considered that the differences in the platforms of the two parties are rooted partly in the broader interpretation of minority self-government and in its foundation (whether it is the large manorial estate or it may be some limited, even movable, property). The Hungarian constitution identifies the government with the crown and the dynasty, thus the government is not a party government but the most appropriate governing agent. In Liphay's view, majority rule is the expression of the confusion of ideas, for it is absurd for the governed to govern, and the governors cannot become the governed. The question is the social selection of the competent, whose competence is guaranteed by their landed property.

He stated that a government that is responsible to the legislation is not only a general absurdity, an attempt at the mixing of hot and cold, but it is particularly absurd in Hungary. Hungary is namely part of the empire, and the introduction of a Hungarian representative government would entail identical governments in the rest of the lands of the empire, and in such a situation the unity of the empire is no longer sustainable. A representative provincial government may feed the local separatisms, while the representative government of the entire empire may preclude the independence of the provinces. Representative governance means the absolutism of the parliament, whereas the laws are to be made jointly by the sovereign and the two houses of the legislation. Representation must be moral, not political.³²

³¹ [Sándor Liphay], "A politikai pártok életműszerzése [The appeal of the political parties]," pts. 1–16, *NU*, Apr. 20, 22, 25, May 2, June 3, 5, 8, 10, 12, 19, 22, 24, 25, July 1, 4, and 10, 1845; idem, "Új irány az agitáció terén [A new trend in agitation]," pts. 1–5, *NU*, Mar. 18, 20, 23, 27, and 30, 1845; idem, "'Új irány az agitáció terén' című cikkünk ellenei [Opponents to our article 'A new trend in agitation']," pts. 1–3, *NU*, May 25, 27, and 29, 1845.

³² [Sándor Liphay], "Előszó programunkhoz [Preface to our program]," pts. 1 and 2, *NU*, Jan. 1 and 2, 1846; idem, "Konstatírozzuk az állásokat őszintén s becsületesen [Let us assess the positions sincerely and honestly]," pts. 1–3, *NU*, Feb. 19, 20, and 22, 1846; idem, "Általánosságok az alkotmányos kormány élete s elméletéből [General ideas on the life and theory of constitutional government]," pts. 1 and 2, *NU*, Mar. 13 and 15, 1846; idem, "Politikai program [Political program]," pts. 1–6, *NU*, June 18, 21, 25, and 30, 1846; idem, "A konzervatív ügy körüli közvetlen teendők [Urgent tasks around the

He surmised that in Hungary, constitutionality is ensured by the aristocracy relying on the landowning estate and the county system, and by the parties that provide stability in the upper and lower houses, while the decisive weight and activity of the moderate aristocratic and moderate democratic center parties guarantee the constitutional government. Progress is an empty word in itself; it is the opposition between stability and mobility, the English and the French models, between change based on the conservation of property relations and the radical reshuffling of these relations that allows one to differentiate and characterize the parties. In contrast to the liberal reformers—which Liphay qualifies as separatist—it is the conservative platform that promotes the improvement of the moderate aristocratic public life, for loyalty to the Habsburg Empire is the fundamental interest of the Hungarians. Confidence is the precondition of inner development, and so is the preservation of peace in Europe. The key factor in the European peace construction is the safety of the Austrian Empire, which Hungary must not jeopardize. If it does so, it can tilt the balance of the European great powers, which will not be tolerated by any monarchy from Prussia to Great Britain. Thus, according to Liphay, internal interest and external pressure add up to urge for the conservation of the monarchic-feudal legitimacy and the power relations of Europe based upon the Holy Alliance.³³

Professing to be an advocate of physiocratic economic political principles, Sándor Liphay did not consider the state to be decisive in domestic economy, but in international economic relations he assigned the determinative role to the state. In his evaluation of the Hungarian party politics, the international situation, and the role of an economic policy, Liphay was close to the decisive personages of the conservative camp and to Chancellor Metternich, whom he held in high esteem.

In conservative journalism, it was Liphay who devoted most attention to the legitimacy of power. In contrast to the popular sovereignty concept

conservative cause],” pts. 1–5, *NU*, Oct. 8, 11, 15, 20, and 23, 1846; idem, “Gróf Széchenyi István és a konzervativizmus [Count István Széchenyi and conservatism],” pts. 1–3, *NU*, Feb. 26, 28, and Mar. 2, 1847; idem, “Mi a konzervativizmus? [What is conservatism?],” pts. 1 and 2, *NU*, Mar. 16 and 26, 1847.

³³ [Sándor Liphay], “Krakkó visszakebelezése [The reincorporation of Krakow],” *NU*, Dec. 8, 1846; idem, “Iránynézetek [Guiding principles],” *NU*, Apr. 11, 1847; idem, “Miről van a kérdés? Mi az első, az alapteendő? [What is the key question, what is to be done first?],” pts. 1 and 2, *NU*, July 1 and 4, 1847; idem, “Pest, szeptember 11,” *NU*, Sept. 12, 1847; idem, “Igénytelen indítvány [Modest proposal],” *NU*, Nov. 2, 1847; idem, “Memorandum,” pts. 1–4, *NU*, Nov. 5, 7, 11, and 14, 1847.

of majority rule, he supported law and order willed by the sovereign with divine sanction, the inevitability of the social division into rulers and ruled, landlords and peasants, the hierarchic stratification of society, and the preservation of the aristocratic constitution already in his anonymously published editorial in 1843. In his immense output between 1845 and 1847 he further embellished on these axioms, adapting the arsenal of traditional conservatism to the conservative offensive to create a pro-government majority in the counties and the diet in the spirit of Aurél Dessewffy, Albert Sztáray, and Ferenc Kállay. What endows his writings with a special flavor is his inclination to theory, his systematizing ambition, and the employment of the outspoken “realism” of a literary gentleman writing to mobilize the passive majority of conservative noblemen.

The writings representing the traditional role of the protection of the constitution in *Nemzeti Újság* left unsaid what the conservatives wished to renew in society. In an effort to justify the government’s moves, the paper was unambiguous about the innovations concerning the state organization and also presented in a clear-cut manner what the friends of the reform would not touch in Hungary.

Lipthay urged for the foundation of a full-fledged conservative party in the autumn of 1845, in at least an implicit form for the time being. A part of the National Circle, a literary society, separated under his co-chairmanship to form the Society for the Common Good (*Közhasznú Gyűlde*). Lipthay introduced the Society to the public as an impartial and apolitical association, but, as he wrote to György Apponyi, it was to pave the way for “a conservative party to be established in the center of Pest.”³⁴ The express aim being the friendly union of the noble and the middle class, the Society’s 408 members included priests, aristocrats, civil servants, judges, merchants, and younger individuals. Participants from the conservative echelon included Antal Szécsen, Emil Dessewffy, Pál Sommsich, and Sándor Luka, as well as two contributors to *Budapesti Híradó* and two journalists of *Nemzeti Újság*.³⁵

Contemporaries guessed that Lipthay entered the Pest Circle with the intention of creating a party, especially when he proposed conservative aristocrats as new members. When the members of the National Circle

³⁴ Sándor Lipthay to Apponyi György, Pest, Oct. 16, 18, 22, Nov. 2, and Dec. 7, 1845, MOL, Magyar Kancellária Levéltára [Unregistered documents of the Hungarian Chancellery], 1838–1848.

³⁵ [János Illucz-Oláh], “Budapesti újdonságok [Novelties in Budapest],” *NU*, Oct. 7, 12, 14, 17, 19, 23, 28, 30, 31, Nov. 4, 1845, Jan. 9, and 22, 1846.

split up and the conservatives separated under Liphthay's leadership, the suspicion was reinforced. Liphthay's letters from October through December of 1845 wholly verified the suspicion.

The Society for the Common Good had 613 members in 1846. The Pest Circle united with the remaining members of the National Circle in 1847 and became the hub of the liberal reformers in Pest under the name Opposition Circle. Then, the Society for the Common Good joined the latter in the spring of 1848, parallel with the role change of *Nemzeti Újság*, thus converting the conservative guard of the constitution into the supporter of the victorious liberals.³⁶

The first attempt Liphthay made at founding a conservative party was *Nemzeti Újság* itself. From January 1845 Liphthay edited the paper with the intention of working out a conservative platform, the chief guidelines of which were the protection of the aristocracy's power based on the land-owning aristocracy, the inviolability of the upper house, and the safety of the aristocratic constitution. Earlier, approaching Ferenc Deák with respect, Liphthay later fiercely attacked him in his zeal to protect the government's moves, that is, the new system of appointed county administrators. In 1847 he published a pamphlet that condemned the grievances of the opposition as unfounded.³⁷

³⁶ Dezsényi (1941), 14–17, 25–29.

³⁷ [Sándor Liphthay], "Majorátusok [Primogeniture]," pts. 1–7, *NU*, July 22, 27, 31, Aug. 5, 10, 14, and 19, 1845; idem, "Időszerű igazságok [Timely truths]," pts. 1 and 2, *NU*, Aug. 26 and 28, 1845; idem, "Még egyszer a honti ügy [The Hont affair once more]," pts. 1 and 2, *NU*, Sept. 2 and 4, 1845; idem, "A majoritások rendszere s még valami [The system of primogeniture and something else]," pts. 1–3, *NU*, Sept. 21, 28, and Oct. 2, 1845; idem, "Elkésett folytatás [Belated continuation]," *NU*, Nov. 6, 1845; idem, "Befejezés [Ending]," *NU*, Nov. 16, 1845; idem, "Politikai ügyhányás Horváth- s Tótországrol [Political argumentation over Croatia and Slovakia]," pts. 1–3, *NU*, Jan. 6, 8, and 9, 1846; idem, "Felelősség [Responsibility]," *NU*, Jan. 11, 1846; idem, "Keserű hivatásunk [Our bitter vocation]," pts. 1–4, *NU*, Feb. 5, 8, 12, and 15, 1846; idem, "Deák Ferenc és a zalai körlevél [Ferenc Deák and the Zala circular]," pts. 1–11, *NU*, Mar. 24, 27, 29, 31, Apr. 2, 3, 12, 16, 19, 21, and 23, 1846; idem, "Kinek-kinek a magáét [Everyone should get what they deserve]," *NU*, Apr. 30, 1846; idem, "A zalai körlevél. Deák s a honti sérelem [The Zala circular. Deák and the grievance of Hont]," *NU*, May 12, 1846; idem, "Ismét egy közelítés [Another approach]," *NU*, May 24, 1846; idem, "A részeknek Erdélytől visszakebelezésük ügyében [On the issue of taking back the Parts from Transylvania]," pts. 1–5, *NU*, Feb. 4, 7, 9, 19, and 23, 1847; idem, "Sérelem-e a főispánok elnöklése a megyei törvényszékeken? [Is it grievous that the főispáns preside over the county legislation?]," *NU*, Dec. 2, 1847; idem, "Az ellenzék sérelmei. A részek visszakapcsolása, a horvát ügy és a honti sérelem érdemében [Grievances of the opposition. Reincorporation of the Parts, the Croatian issue, and the grievance of Hont]," (Pest,

The second of his attempts was the Society also perpetuated by Sándor Petőfi's poem *To the Youth of the Society of the Common Good*. Further research is needed to clear up the connection between the Society and the Conservative Party, which was officially founded on November 12, 1846, with special regard to the question why the party was not set up earlier, closer to Liphay's initiative.³⁸ Liphay played an important role in the making of the party. In June 1846 he became a member of its board. His work was the basis for the platform consented to in November. His program proposal was that which Emil Dessewffy corrected and finalized.³⁹

Toleration: Its Guarantees

Budapesti Híradó, a more flexible medium of cautious progress than *Nemzeti Újság*, discussed the questions of a modernized system of privileges concerning economic policy and nationalities, as well as the relation between the opposition and the government. The young leader of the conservatives, Antal Szécsen, discussed the voting rights of the non-noble intellectuals, the Croatian issue, the order of county and dietal assemblies, and the restructuring of the diet in his articles. Emil Dessewffy elaborated

1847). Cf. János Perger, "Politikai pártok mérkőzése [Rivalry of political parties]," pts. 1–3, *NU*, Apr. 5, 7, and 9, 1846; Károly Mészáros, "A státuszpolgári nevelés elvei [Principles of educating citizens]," pts. 1–3, *NU*, Oct. 30, Nov. 1 and 5, 1846; idem, "Hongyűlési irányeshmék [Direction of thought at the diet]," pts. 1–3, *NU*, Oct. 7, 8, and 15, 1847; János Perger, "A kormány és a megyék 'vis inertiae' hatalma [The 'vis inertiae' power of the government and the counties]," *NU*, Sept. 10, 1847.

³⁸ *Ünnepély a Gyűlédben 1845. végnapján*. Kiadják a megtiszteltnek [Liphay Sándornak] elvrokoni és barátai [Celebration in the Society on the last day of 1845. Published by the comrades and friends of the celebrity Sándor Liphay], (Pest, 1846); Dezsényi (1941), 14–17. See also, Petőfi (1972), 418–419. Here the secularized theological antitheses of "youth and old age," "salvation and damnation," and "light and darkness" are Manichean oppositions. Petőfi's passionately branding poem written in despair was a simplifying, even vulgar response to the splitting up of the National Circle, expressing in extreme terms the desperation of the liberal reformers. His anticlericalism was certainly an exception but it needs further research to explore its causes. For an objective and discriminating approach to the role of the Hungarian Catholic clergy in the studied period, see Csorba (1999).

³⁹ Documents, letters, and drafts related to the Conservative Party, MOL, DcsLt, Acta Publica, Emil Dessewffy's political writings. [Sándor Liphay], "Konzervatív pártalkotási program [The program of establishing a conservative party]," and [Emil Dessewffy], "Konzervatív pártprogram [The Conservative Party program]," OSZKK, Analecta 11085.

mainly on economic political issues in this paper that he edited and in separate pamphlets.

The non-noble intellectuals' voting rights at county meetings and elections had long been a bone of contention between the liberal reformers and the conservatives. The oppositionist advocates of the "unification of interests" wished to see the non-noble intellectuals admitted into the body politic as the first step of the extension of political rights and placing the noble county system on the basis of the representation of the people. Aurél Dessewffy had already declared in his article in *Világ*, "Relations of the legislation and county authority," that the political rights of the intellectuals belonged to the jurisdiction of the diet and not of the county. Moreover, the writings of Albert Sztáray and Emil Dessewffy were calling for the exclusion of the propertyless common nobles from politics (instead of the inclusion of the non-noble intellectuals).⁴⁰ Antal Szécsen also presented his ideas on the theme, in a two-part article.⁴¹

Antal Szécsen, substituting for the *főispán* of Pozsega county, rebutted the liberal claim—that the non-noble intellectuals were having their share of the noblemen's burden but not their rights—by declaring that this disproportion would disappear with general taxation. However, he failed to clarify when and how the burdens of taxation would be shared. Answering the argument that the intellectuals endowed with rights could represent interests in the counties that had been missing so far, the young conservative aristocrat opined that the non-noble intellectuals were unable to counterbalance the poor noblemen because educational qualification or personal erudition did not entail political intelligence as well. Political sagacity rested on political interest, of ensuring stability guaranteed first of all by the landed estate, he argued. The intellectual career did not entitle one to take part in politics because it demanded no commitment to a political system. It was the possession of land that made one interested in stability

⁴⁰ X. Y. Z. [Aurél Dessewffy], "Törvényhozás és megyei hatóság viszonyai [Relations between legislation and county authority]," *V*, Sept. 8, 1841; Albert Sztáray, "Nagymihályi levelek [Letters from Nagymihály]," pts. 1–3, *V*, Jan. 8, 15, and 19, 1842; idem, "Státusz-gazdasági elmékedések [Thoughts on state economy]," *V*, Apr. 2, 1842; idem, "Háziadó [Domestic tax]," pts. 1 and 2, *V*, Apr. 13 and 16, 1842; Emil Dessewffy (1843b) 29–43; [Antal Szécsen], "Újabb észrevételek a Pesti Hírlap 'Széttétekintés' című vezércikkére [New comments on 'Outlook,' the Pesti Hírlap's leader]," *V*, Apr. 6, 1842; idem, "Majorátusok [Primogeniture]," *V*, Sept. 21, 1842; idem, "Hitrebizottságok és majorátusok [Credit committees and primogeniture]," *V*, Oct. 26, 1842.

⁴¹ [Antal Szécsen], "Honoráciorok [Non-noble intellectuals]," pts. 1 and 2, *BH*, Aug. 12 and 15, 1845.

as the basis for the actors of politics. The political rights of non-noble intellectuals who were similar to the poor nobility would not solve the political representation of the latter, but would increase the weight of the propertyless in the counties, whereas law, order, and stability would require the reinforcement of the political influence of the landed nobility. The counties were not only electoral bodies but also public administrative organs, the tools of the implementation of laws. It was imperative to give decisive political say to those whose estates and tax burdens were the largest, for the creation of the guarantees of stability had higher priority than the extension of political rights.

The motion put forth to grant consultative and voting rights to the non-noble intellectuals lacked all guarantees of stability, and for this reason Antal Szécsen opposed the motion to grant political rights.⁴² Szécsen turned it down as one of the first steps in introducing popular representation in the counties and also enhancing the influence of the liberal reformers in the name of “separation” as understood by Albert Sztáray and Emil Dessewffy. He pitted against the liberal motion Sztáray’s proposition to increase the weight of the propertied in the counties. His opinion about the intellectuals’ political role—their lack of commitment—as opposed to the interestedness of the large landowners tallied with the views of Aurél Dessewffy, Albert Sztáray, Emil Dessewffy, Ferenc Kállay, and Sándor Liphay. Szécsen’s straightforward language is particularly close to Kállay’s and Liphay’s.

In Szécsen’s interpretation, the legislative centralization proposed by the centralists probably meant a parliamentary government, which was insufficiently defined because the proportion of the aristocratic and democratic elements remained unclear, and the guarantees for respect and improvement of the existing laws were missing from it.

In his view the centralists set the form (and not the spirit) of English parliamentarianism and the liberal credo was based on the initial principles of the French revolution as the norm against reality, whereas the guarantees of order and liberty ought to be developed from reality instead of imposing norms upon reality. Before the application of norms, real relations would have to be erased, which would entail incalculable consequences. The centralists of *Pesti Hírlap* were copiers of foreign doctrines and patterns, he claimed, while the conservatives stood firmly in reality. Concerning the county issue, two bad extremes had emerged: one that would have the county devoured by the central power, and one that would

⁴² [Antal Szécsen], “Non-noble intellectuals.”

neutralize the central will by the county. Szécsen believed that the right position was that of the conservatives, for the overriding principle of the Hungarian political life was its being a monarchy built on a municipal structure. As the leading figure of the "neo-conservatives," Antal Szécsen declared that both of the above extremes were false tracks, therewith denying representative government and popular representation in the county assembly. He put his thoughts on the basis of feudal municipalism in support of the conservative offensive to convert the counties into the executive organs of the government. He cited events in Switzerland from which the inference could be drawn that the problem was "not in the forms but in life, in the libertinism of intellectual movements leading to material anarchy, in the saddening excesses of the parties, that is, in the deliberate disorganization of social and political life."⁴³

On one side were individual interest, passion, empty reverie, party strife, and agitation of the spirit, and on the other patriotism, sober thought, and respect for law.

Szécsen, the upper house leader of the young conservative aristocrats during the 1843/44 diet, rose to speak mainly in the disputes over the Croatian question. He expressed disapproval of the introduction of the Hungarian language in the domestic administration of Croatia, and also of Kossuth's proposal to let Croatia separate from Hungary (put forth on June 10, 1842). Szécsen argued for the recognition of the privileges that had evolved historically and called for righteousness in handling the Croatian question, but he had no positive suggestions to redress the moot points. He condemned the idea of extending political rights, stressing the doctrine of historical-national individuality.⁴⁴

In his four-part article published in January and February of 1846, Szécsen embarked on the legal status of the nobility of Turopole and the Croatian diet.⁴⁵ He claimed that similarly to the propertyless common nobles of the county, the nobility of Turopole were not in possession of

⁴³ [Antal Szécsen], "Pest, aug. 3," *BH*, Aug. 3, 1845; idem, "Közügyeink [Our public matters]," *BH*, Jan. 19, 1845; idem, "Polémia [Polemics]," *BH*, July 29, 1845.

⁴⁴ *FN* (1843/44) 1:38, 154–155, 242, 2:328–329, 5:181, 6:122–123. Cf. Bártfai (1943) 1:451–454.

⁴⁵ [Antal Szécsen], "A horvát bonyodalmak [Problems of Croatia]," pts. 1–4, *BH*, Jan. 11, 13, 16, and 18, 1846, also *NU*, Jan. 13, 15, 18, and 20, 1846; idem, "Még egy szó a horvát ügyekről [One more word about the Croatian matters]," *BH*, Feb. 5, 1846, also *NU*, Feb. 7, 1846. Turopole: a privileged district beside the three counties (Kőrös, Varsasd, and Zágráb) in Croatia. Its traditionally pro-Hungarian nobility was represented in the lower house of the Hungarian diet from 1807. See Varga (1993) and Ress (2004).

the mental qualifications indispensable for political participation, and therefore canvassers could easily guide them. Szécsen offered this indirect argument to justify the exclusion of the Turopole nobles from politics. The settling of the problem of the Croatian provincial diet with the monarch's rescript—which evaded the Hungarian diet, “coordinating” matters in an absolutistic way to the detriment of the Hungarian party—was not unlawful in Szécsen's view. In general, Szécsen declared, unprincipled party clashes were the battle of emotions, and the principles were only used to justify the tempest of emotions retrospectively. He warned that when judging the Croatian parties, one had to look deeper than the superficial designations, as it was also in Hungary's interest to generate sympathy in Croatia toward the Hungarian constitution and the relationship of the two countries. Therefore, the ally had to be chosen with great care.

What policy do we want ... to pursue toward Croatia? Just the opposite of what the oppositionists have put on their banner. The conservatives have either kept silent about the Croatian issue, or followed the flag of the opposition, carried away by the national feeling. True, we have to give up several favorite ideas of ours cherished so far about this question, but at the same time, we must not forget that the acknowledgement of the Croats' rights and interests may help those in Croatia who are advocating respect for the existing relationship and the need for the consensus of the two parts in a common country. Let us respect the others' claim to rights that we would like to be respected for. Let us overlook their prejudices; acknowledge their rightful demands; let us not force them to defend rights in their official status that the public interest would like to see abolished; and if this course has no other outcome, at least lawfulness and righteousness will be on our side. It is the conservative party's duty to raise its voice for moderation and ensure the true interests of the nation wherever they may be endangered by thoughtless nationalist passions.⁴⁶

After stating that the conservative policy bearing fruit in the long run was in conflict with the opposition's policy and after listing several generally valid theses, he continued adducing his arguments. As against the opposition's policy aiming at linguistic and constitutional unity, the conservatives wished to promote “the stability and growth of the spiritual harmony of interests and tendencies” on the basis of rejecting assimilation and social mobility, moderation, righteousness, and respect for historical rights. From the generalities of “tolerance” and “understanding,” the absolutist settlement of the Croatian diet and the exclusion of the nobles of Turopole led him back into practical politics, clearly illustrating what the conservative offensive meant in the Croatian question. Today, we know that Croa-

⁴⁶ [Antal Szécsen], “Problems of Croatia,” pt. 2.

tian liberal nationalism was subdivided at that time, that the Austro-Slavic tendency was gaining strength in contradistinction to the Hungaro-Slavic trend. The forces in opposition to the Hungaro-Slavic trend cannot be confined to Jelačić. Conversely, it was probably the Austro-Slavic current that shaped the position of Jelačić.⁴⁷

In light of the source material on the Croatian policy that the conservatives worked out, and was asserted by György Apponyi and Antal Szécsen, it is justified to conclude that the Hungarian conservatives were again supporting the adversaries of their opponents, since their ideas and acts concerning Croatia were all determined by the goal of pushing back the liberal reformers.⁴⁸

That applies to their Hungarian policy as well. The conservatives' interpretation of Croatia's special legal status and their attitude to it disguised as tolerance led to the denial of the extension of rights and assimilation, and the increase of the absolute power of the state over society. Similarly, the conservation of feudal municipalism, and at the same time the subjection of the county system to the government in the name of effective administration, also served to prepare for a pro-government majority at the diet.

Antal Szécsen's advice to administer moderation was complemented by the minimizing of the "Pan-Slavic" threat and the reiteration of the doctrine that the criterion of a nation was not language and common origin, but history and the constitutional status, and consequently, in the countries of the Hungarian Crown there were only two nations: the Hungarian and the Croatian. The guarantee of law and order in Croatia was also the ousting of the liberal reformers. The appointment in the spring of 1848 of Jelačić as Ban of Croatia, upon Baron Samu Jósika's recommendation, was in line with the policies of the Hungarian conservatives.

Conservative journalism devoted increasing attention to the regulation of political meetings and the order of the diet. The following was written in the February 7, 1847 issue of *Budapesti Híradó*:

Among all the high-priority questions that our prospective legislature has to settle, the freedom of expression deserves first place ... The suppression and questioning of free speech is an illness that might eventually kill our entire constitutional life ... When the audience, forgetting about their obligation, tries to gain support either under the pretext of the moral pressure of public opinion or with physical force and excessive loudness,

⁴⁷ Ress (2004), 62–84, (2008), 35–38.

⁴⁸ Gyula Miskolczy (1927), 1:296, 358–359, 412–413, 417–418, 424, Gyula Miskolczy (n.d.), 152–175, Szabad (1981), and Varga (1993), 77–92.

they violate the rights of the dietal representatives and also infringe upon their own duty, which is to listen.”⁴⁹

In other words, he claimed that those entitled to express their opinions had to be ensured this right even under the moral or physical pressure of the audience. That was the meaning of the freedom of opinion, one of the chief guarantees of order. Antal Szécsen declared about a month later that free speech was conditional upon the order of the sessions.

Whenever the discussion is about constitutional and legal relations, we come into conflict with the oppositionists particularly because they seek the balance of constitutionality in certain theoretical principles and we seek them in our laws. As regards this issue ... our laws are in concord with the abstract constitutional requirements ... those who wish to enjoy the benefits of free discussing must also tolerate its excessive outgrowths at times; when, however, these outgrowths constitute the normal state of affairs; when—like here—there is no force that can bridle them and thus the majority is often exposed to the tyranny of the minority and it is again the material and chaotic, and hence often arbitrary force of the number that can only overcome it, then a situation has arisen which urgently needs remedy.⁵⁰

Antal Szécsen responded in *Budapesti Híradó* to the counter arguments that the chairman of the session should be elected by public confidence and not appointed, and that the excessive behavior of the audience was the consequence of the lack of the freedom of the press:

Anyone who has looked carefully in our constitution at the status of the lawfully selected chairmen will have found that since they are the only selections by the government to head the assembly they cannot bestow this post upon anyone else without thoroughgoing changes to our entire constitutional structure ... The effect [of such a change] cannot be lasting and beneficial unless it is consented to legally by the legislative body based on serious conviction. Such consent cannot be won without quiet consultations, one of whose main preconditions is the power of the chairman to take orderly but legal measures.⁵¹

Szécsen's argument was reminiscent of Zsedényi's dietal speeches on misconduct at the counties and the question of towns, which were also aimed to enhance government influence as their implicit goal. Szécsen argued that the dietal procedure had to be regulated, initiated by the

⁴⁹ [Antal Szécsen], “A vélemény szabadság biztosítása [Ensuring the freedom of speech],” *BH*, Feb. 7, 1847.

⁵⁰ [Antal Szécsen], “Régi közmondás [An ancient proverb],” *BH*, Mar. 4, 1847.

⁵¹ [Antal Szécsen], “A tanácskozási rendnek fenntartása [Maintaining the order of procedure],” *BH*, Mar. 9, 1847.

chairman appointed by the government similarly to the counties where it was the task of the *főispán* to keep order, and then the desirable changes for the sake of order would be effective if the lawful forms were observed. The logic runs counter to the ideas of modern liberal parliamentarianism: legal forms are needed for the law enforcing measures of the government to be effective, but these legal forms are degraded to mere backdrops of absolutistic moves.

Szécsen's summarizing question calls to mind Aurél Dessewffy's reasoning about the preventive and repressive regulation of the press: "Where are the legislative guarantees that are legally demanded of the press even in the most liberal countries when the audience is allowed to express approval or disapproval, and who will act as a responsible editor amidst such improper hollering?"

Szécsen sums up his analogy between the regulated press and regulated legislation as follows:

No, no; this whole argumentation must rest on a mistake, on a seeming and unreal analogy, and it would only have weight, if it was being deliberated whether the audience should be locked out, thus publicity eliminated entirely, instead of the repudiation of the real shortcomings of the audience. There is no greater threat to a soberly mature public than revolutionary behavior that jeopardizes the autonomy of the consulting bodies. It may be good for one party or another, but never for the country ... This is our credo: public assemblies, but with silence and decorum.

He stated that the direct guarantees against the pressure from below were the unquestionable authority of the chairman appointed by the government and that the audience might listen to but not influence the discussions. The indirect guarantees included the given status quo as the starting point instead of a *tabula rasa*, that is, the domestic situation, and the aristocratic constitution, as the base instead of foreign models.

Another important point was that order during discussions be introduced to the diet. Szécsen exchanged polemics regarding this issue with József Irinyi, who thought the application of the norms of liberal parliamentarianism would put things into order, while in Szécsen's view it was desirable that the annual convocation of the existing diet and the next legislative body be elected for a five-year term:

In England, the main weight of governing the state is in the legislative body and the government, while the crown is chiefly a restrictive force. In our country, the aristocracy and the diets restrict the monarchy, instead of the monarchy restricting the parliament. [Consequently] the enactment of a one-year term for the diet would either en-

tail the transfer of the supreme power ... (which does not go without risks or fighting unless it is the natural outcome of the regular development of events and forces, and not the improvised result of an enforced law), or if the enforced law fails to put it into practice what only time can achieve, and this is probable, then the whole move will result in the confusion of public administration and legislation, and the unsuccessful complication of the state machinery—a new and sorely perfect political disillusion. Let it suffice to refer to France, to compare ... the annual session of the French chambers to the English parliament to realize that the similarity of form is not a safe sign of the identity of the essence.⁵²

That is how the leader of the *cautious progressives* argued in *Budapesti Híradó* on May 11, 1847. He named the monarch's will as the source of legitimacy and he turned the constitutional forms against the spirit of constitutionality. On June 4, he answered József Irinyi's comments:

[In Irinyi's view] some of our statements derive from the principles of the old school of the conservative party and not from the principles of constitutionality ... Quite to the contrary, we claim to have taken our views on the supreme power from the basic laws of the constitution and not from the doctrines of the old conservative school alone. We think that "certain basic principles of constitutional life" in general is far too indefinite and explainable in so many ways by parties and opinions that we must tarry with acknowledging them before the author explicates them in more definite terms, honoring, however, the designation of "constitutional conservative" which may indeed incorporate our entire political credo.⁵³

Szécsen's thought it necessary to retain the legal exclusion of the non-noble intellectuals and oust the propertyless common nobles from county level politics in order to increase the political weight of the propertied nobility. In Croatia, he supported the forces set against the Hungarian liberal reformers' policies. He wanted order of discussions on the basis of the superiority of the government, arranging dietal procedure with a view to stability and control. These were the precisely formulated contents of Antal Szécsen's "constitutional conservatism," justifying the forms of aristocratic political involvement and the processes of absolutistic decision making. Against anarchy and subversion, Antal Szécsen was in search of the guarantees of order in his journalistic output and appeared to find them in the "lying estate," the government, and the aristocratic constitution. In addition to the organic axioms, one can glean the anticipation

⁵² [Antal Szécsen], "Midőn néhány hét előtt [When a few weeks ago]," *BH*, May 11, 1847. Cf. József Irinyi, "Az országgyűlés rendezéséről [On ensuring order of procedure at the diet]," (Pest, 1847).

⁵³ [Antal Szécsen], "Azon észrevételek [Those remarks]," *BH*, June 4, 1847.

and justification of the “order enforcing” measures of the government in the writings of the conservative politician who combined the traditional defense of the constitution with the tradition of loyalty to the court. The style of this young aristocrat was more polished but his outlook more strongly aulic than the writings of his fellow conservatives, Ferenc Kállay, Sándor Lipthay, and Albert Sztáray. Of course, it was his social position that primarily differentiated him from the rest, namely that he played the key role in the foundation of the Conservative Party. Count Antal Szécsen, a confidential friend of György Apponyi and Samu Jósika, undertook to mediate between the top officials of the government and the administrative apparatus on the board preparing the establishment of the party and then in the inaugural meeting. Beside him, Count Emil Dessewffy, the leading publicist of *Budapesti Híradó*, had a decisive role in preparing the foundation of the Party and in the journalism of the conservative offensive.

Aristocracy, Nation, and Empire

Emil Dessewffy's comments to the leading article of the June 19, 1846 issue of *Budapesti Híradó* reads as follows:

The only reason that makes me profess the political views of an aristocrat is that I was born in Hungary where it is in the interest not only of the constitution but, more importantly, of the entire nation that the aristocracy should survive. I have a very simple argumentation in support: I hold it as unquestionable that at present the adherence to the constitution and the Hungarian nationality, and the material and intellectual capacity that gives weight to this sentiment and loyalty despite all the signs of degeneration and perversity, is found in its most viable form in the nobility above all other classes of society (I understand the whole nobility as the aristocracy). We must not and need not take the ground from under the feet of such a class. Any change that reduces the strength of this weight is *wrong because it is radical*, attacking the roots, the basis of a finer future of the country, and cutting back something never large enough without being able to make up for the loss. By contrast, any change that sustains the power of this weight is *good because it is conservative*, and *even better* if it increases this weight by fostering something that is never large enough in quantity. The *best* thing is to have new groups of similar weight and qualities arise in addition to the retention of the old one, or to rouse them to activity if they already exist, because then it is *progressively conservative*.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ [Károly Vida?], “Egy plebejus levelei gróf Dessewffy Emilhez [Letter of a plebeian to Count Emil Dessewffy],” and “I. Dessewffy Emil megjegyzései [Emil Dessewffy's remarks],” *BH*, June 19, 1846.

In other words, what he is said here is that radical changes were unnecessary and bad. The weakening and elimination of the nobility could not mean the elevation of the unprivileged, and its demise entailed the death of the nation. Conservative changes conserved the nobility, while conservative progress enhanced its strength, thus ushering the development of the society beneath in an aristocratic direction.

Explaining progressive conservatism, Emil Dessewffy contrasted the urban question and equal taxation, both of which he deemed desirable, with their radical transformation that would jeopardize the survival of the nobility:

Any restructuring of the towns that would paralyze the present weight of the nobility is bad *because it is radical*, while its regulation that preserving this weight brings new ones of similar qualities into motion is the best because it is *progressively conservative*. The benefit of the nobility's sharing in taxation is not the weakening of the nobility and the promotion of the democratic element so that it can trample the former underfoot. The benefit will derive from the clever gradual succession of the steps so that the weight of the nobility and with that the guarantees of the survival of the constitution and the nation will be strengthened; if these are unharmed, then the rise of the democratic elements instead of their ruination, their partaking of the constitution surrounded by viable elements, is the unavoidable tendency of our century.⁵⁵

What makes the nobility the sustainer of the nation?

At present the adherence to the constitution and the Hungarian nationality, and the material and intellectual capacity that gives weight to this sentiment and loyalty, is mainly found in the nobility in the most viable form ... above all other classes of society, despite all the signs of degeneration and perversity ... I find the conservative (sustaining) nature of the nobility in the above qualities, and this nature makes me respect the aristocracy as a political institution in our constitution and wish for its survival. I have faith that the nobility will not lose these qualities and this makes me hope that it will

⁵⁵ [Károly Vida?], "Letters of a plebeian..." Cf. [Emil Dessewffy], "Megyei zavarok [County disorders]," *BH*, July 2, 1844; idem, "Pártnevezések [Party nominations]," *BH*, July 5, 1844; idem, "A Pesti Hírlap..." *BH*, July 9, 1844; idem, "Olcsó pénz és olcsó rend [Cheap money and cheap order]," *BH*, July 11, 1844; idem, "Összhangzás az intézkedésekben [Concerted actions]," *BH*, July 19, 1844; idem, "Tájékoztatás [For information]," *BH*, Aug. 27, 1844; idem, "Akadozó előmenetelünk néhány oka [Some reasons for our halting progress]," *BH*, Sept. 3, 1844; idem, "Néhány szó a felkapott újnemű izgatás tárgyában [Some words about the new fashionable agitation]," *BH*, Sept. 15, 1844; idem, "Szűkkeblűség [Small-mindedness]," *BH*, Oct. 17, 1844; Lajos Kossuth, "Nyílt levél Gróf Dessewffy Emil úrhoz [Open letter to Count Emil Dessewffy]," pts. 1–3, and "Dessewffy Emil megjegyzései [Emil Dessewffy's remarks]," *BH*, Nov. 22, 24, and 26, 1844.

not become redundant as an institution, even though the form in which the functioning of this element will be manifest will considerably change over the time.⁵⁶

Emil Dessewffy's thesis is strongly reminiscent of Sándor Lipthay's and Antal Szécsen's postulations that the wealthy nobility is interested in sustaining the stability of the aristocratic political life and in preserving law and order, which reminds one of the arguments of Aurél Dessewffy, Ferenc Kállay, and Albert Sztáray concerning the connection of the large estate and the aristocratic constitution.

As chief editor and owner of *Budapesti Híradó*, Emil Dessewffy characterized his attitude to the nobility as follows:

I look for a sustaining element in the nobility—as long as I find it there, I have affection for it, but if I no longer find it, my sympathy is over for it as a political factor. I am aware that one can find sustaining elements outside the nobility as well, and I am only too glad to embrace them wherever I find them ... By aristocracy, I never understand the estate of the magnates and the wealthy nobility. I know this class as I was born into it through no fault of my own, and therefore I have little political sympathy for it because—though there are a few signs of improvement, these are not enough; its Magyarization is progressing far slower than it should, and its indifference to public affairs has hardly changed. These are regrettable conditions, yet “Magyars are still alive and Buda is still free.”⁵⁷

Dessewffy's critical remarks of the aristocracy, despite the generalized formulation, were not much different from Ferenc Kállay's observation that the human weaknesses of certain aristocrats cannot question the validity of the whole aristocracy. Owing to its material and intellectual weight, Dessewffy held that the nobility was the sustainer of the nation, or rather, it could be its sustainer if it became Magyarized and took part in politics. As he saw it, the nation sustaining capacity of the nobility belonged far more to the frequently denounced realm of norms than to the domain of reality deeply respected by the conservatives.

Outlining the broader perspectives, however, the picture may be modified. In May 1846 Emil Dessewffy stressed the threat against the Magyar nation, which was a serious turn away from the usual minimizing approach. According to the argument of Dessewffy, it was not Germaniza-

⁵⁶ [Károly Vida?], “Letters of a plebeian...” Cf. [Emil Dessewffy], “A múltakból levonható némi tanulságok [Some conclusions to be drawn from the pasts],” *BH*, Jan. 28, 1845; idem, “Nézzünk szét a teendők között [Let's take a look at the tasks],” pts. 1–7, *BH*, Feb. 9, Apr. 17, 20, May 2, June 29, Aug. 31, and Sept. 2, 1845.

⁵⁷ [Károly Vida?], “Letters of a plebeian...” Cf. [Lajos Kossuth], “A *Világ* új metamorfózisa [The new metamorphosis of *Világ*],” *PH*, June 13, 1844. “Magyars are still alive and Buda is still free,” cited from Károly Kisfaludy's poem *Mohács*.

tion or Pan-Slavism that threatened the Hungarians, the major threat to the existence of the Hungarian nation was the emancipation of the millions of unprivileged. Kossuth was quick to respond to this train of thought in *Hungarian Appeals* published in 1847 in Hamburg due to the strict censorship over the liberal reformers' publications at home.⁵⁸

Hungarian constitutionality—in Emil Dessewffy's ratiocination—was in the minority in Hungary, since it was the sum total of the prerogatives of a few hundred thousand privileged people, and the non-Magyar speakers outnumbered the Magyar population. Since the government had done more for the unprivileged than the nobility, the government might count on the good will of the non-nobles, but the nobility could not.⁵⁹

Dessewffy reiterated in almost every article at that time that the policy of the extension of civil rights was threatening the nobility, the core of the Hungarian nation, and that the nobility, in turn, was undermining its own constitutional existence when bidding in defiance of the government. The nobility, he said, needed to trust the government as the only guardian of the peaceful strengthening of the Hungarian nation. Those who did not understand that exposed the nation to decay. Since the government was not threatening the nation in any way and even gave signs of being inclined to reforms, the opposition was still pursuing its old policy of grievances and was doing its utmost to obstruct the functioning of the political mechanisms. It could do so because it had the majority in the lower house and its mass basis, the youth, expected it to do so. This "policy of defiance" foiled all reforms and threatened the existence of the nation. It was

⁵⁸ Bábolnai (1846).

⁵⁹ [Emil Dessewffy], "Legyünk őszinték [Let's be honest]," pts. 1–7, *BH*, May 1, 8, 12, 15, 22, 24, and 31, 1846; idem, "Némi tájékoztatás a horvát ügyekben [Some information on the Croatian matters]," *BH*, Nov. 16, 1845; idem, "Deák Ferenc szózata az ellenzékhez és az abban fekvő tanulság [Ferenc Deák's address to the opposition and the inferences to be drawn from it]," pts. 1–3, *BH*, Dec. 7, 9, and 12, 1845; idem, "Visszapillantás a múlt országgyűlés óta lefolyt időszakra [Looking back on the period since the last diet]," *BH*, Jan. 2, 1846; idem, "Merítsünk, mennyire lehet, mindenkől tanulságot [Let us draw what conclusion all matters offer]," *BH*, Feb. 13, 1846; idem, "Ne zavarjuk egybe, minek elkülönözötteen lehet csak épségben fennállani [Let's not mix us what can only be sensible separately]," *BH*, Feb. 15, 1846; idem, "Mi körül forog tulajdonképpen a vita? [What is the debate actually about?]," *BH*, Feb. 17, 1846; idem, "Szokjunk el némi öröklött balfogalmaktól [Let's give up some inherited misconceptions]," *BH*, Feb. 24, 1846; idem, "Még egy szó azokról, miktől elszoknunk kellene [One more word about what we should give up]," *BH*, Mar. 6, 1846; idem, "A reform konzervatív módra [Reform in a conservative manner]," *BH*, Mar. 8, 1846; idem, "Akadályok, nehézségek, eredmények [Obstacles, difficulties, and results]," *BH*, Mar. 13, 1846.

therefore the duty of the conservatives to support the government—provided that it acts within the frames of the constitution—and to push the opposition into a minority.⁶⁰

What must happen so that in the next diet—unlike in 1843/44—beneficial results and substantial reforms may please us? ... First of all, the *reformist policy* must overcome the *policy of defiance* ... Secondly, the *practical policy* must overcome the *utopian policy* ... also, O'Connell's *policy of gradual steps* must overcome the *policy of leaps* ... Finally, *love of the country by deeds* must overcome *love of the country by words*.⁶¹

In articles covering the same topic, Dessewffy wrote that the policy of the opposition consists of enthusiasm, turbulence, and a lot of *kuruc* reminiscences, but enthusiasm results in despondency, unrest causes impatience, and the defiant *kuruc* ambitions paralyze the constructive policy. The foundations of the opposition consist of the exaggeration of the concept of self-government, *vis inertiae*, and centralization without a center. It could be credited with the erection of guarantees against grievances, the protection of the constitution, and the strengthening of the nation. Its over enthusiasm, the polarization by the logic of “all or naught,” and its opposition to the government were only useful in a negative defensive role. The mobilizing role needed something else; primarily respect for the government, bargaining, and readiness to compromise. In Hungary it was namely the government that safeguarded order hence it could not identify with the opposition. If it did so, it would be a sign of weakness, whereas order and reformism require strength. This is why the government must undertake the role of the initiator of reforms, and the opposition must recede into a minority. The preservation of the possibility of peaceful development depended on the government's initiative and its conservative support, this was the only obstacle to pressure from the lower reaches of society. The government had to adapt to the prevalent ideas and circumstances anyway, but it must not surrender to the opposition, to forces opposed to the hierarchy, to the dynasty, or to the government. Amidst aristocratic social forms, no democratic opposition should have a majority. A parliamentary government was only possible for the whole of the empire, dependant on imperial legislation, but that was a castle in the clouds because of the national diversity of the empire.⁶²

⁶⁰ [Emil Dessewffy], “Legyünk őszinték [Let's be honest],” pts. 1–7, *BH*, May 1, 8, 12, 15, 22, 24, and 31, 1846.

⁶¹ [Emil Dessewffy], “Let's be honest,” pt. 2.

⁶² [Emil Dessewffy], “Nyílt levelek Erős Lajoshoz, Szabolcsba [Open letters to Lajos Erős in Szabolcs],” pts. 1–6, *BH*, Feb. 12, 14, 16, 19, 21, and 23, 1847, esp. pt. 4, Feb. 19, 1847.

The desirable road of progress against despotism from above and from below was that of the constitutional reform parallel with the strengthening of ties to the Austrian Empire and of the municipal life instead of utopias and the adoption of foreign patterns. The counties must be regulated by excluding the poor common nobility and increasing the weight of the wealthy strata, and subordinating the county to the government in the interest of effective public administration.⁶³

Dessewffy opined that the reason why the centralists were against the county system as something thoroughly bad was that the opposition had misused it. Eötvös and his comrades stood for the diet's right of verification and against the county's right to instruct its deputy. They would also endow the diet with licenses that belonged to the jurisdiction of the government and the county. That, however, would undermine the county structure, which was the school of politics, the vital condition of Hungarian constitutionality, and the framework of the maintenance and practice of national wealth and intelligence. It was not the ancient gathering of the people but a monarchic authority belonging under the supervision of the government.⁶⁴

⁶³ Emil Dessewffy (1843b) 29–43; idem, “County disorders.”

⁶⁴ [Emil Dessewffy], “A Pesti Hírlap legújabb vallomásai [New confessions of the *Pesti Hírlap*],” pts. 1 and 2, *BH*, July 6 and 8, 1845; idem, “A központosítók tévedései [Mistakes of the centralizers],” *BH*, July 11, 1845; idem, “Eszmetöredékek azon kérdés felett: vajon lehető-e nálunk az új P Hírlap szerinti parlamentáris kormány? [Pondering the possibility of the parliamentary government as proposed by the new *P Hírlap*],” *BH*, July 13, 1845; idem, “Miképp lehet magunkon igazítanunk? [How to better our cause?],” *BH*, July 17 and 18, 1845. See also, [Antal Szécsen], “Az 1843/44-ik évi országgyűlés [The diet of 1843/44],” pts. 1 and 3, *BH*, Dec. 26 and 27, 1844; idem, “Közügyeink [Our public matters],” *BH*, Jan. 19, 1845; idem, “Figyelmeztetés az átalakítók legújabb nemének ferdeségeire [Warning against the mistakes of the new efforts of the transformers],” *BH*, Mar. 20, 1845; [Emil Dessewffy], “Némi eligazodásul [For information],” *BH*, Oct. 21, 1845; idem, “További fejtegetések a P. H. és E. H. állításait illetőleg [Further arguments concerning the statements of *PH* and *EH*],” *BH*, Oct. 23, 1845; idem, “További magyarázatok a P. H. irányában [Further explanations to *PH*],” *BH*, Oct. 26, 1845; idem, “Még egyszer a parlamentáris kormányról [Once more about the parliamentary government],” *BH*, Oct. 28, 1845; idem, “Még egyszer a P. H. ellen [Once more against *PH*],” *BH*, Oct. 31, 1845. Cf. Szalay (1845); [Domokos Teleki], “Irány [Direction],” pts. 1 and 2, *EH*, May 23 and 27, 1845; idem, “Deák és az ellenzék, a Budapesti Híradó és a konzervatívok [Deák and the opposition, *BH* and the conservatives],” *EH*, Jan. 2, 1846; idem, “Számvetés a Budapesti Híradóval [Showdown with *BH*],” *EH*, Aug. 27, 1846; idem, “Még egyszer és utoljára a B. P. H. szemleírójának [A last word to the reviewer of *BH*],” *EH*, Oct. 1, 1846; Jenő Gyerő [Zsigmond Kemény], “Polémia a Budapesti Híradó ellen [Polemic against *BH*],” pts. 1–7, *EH*, Aug. 22, 26, 29,

Emil Dessewffy identified the nation with the nobility, and coupled the notion of the *populus Hungaricus* with feudal municipalism and the concept of a government, symbolizing "order above parties." Dessewffy proposed the whole and the parts of the aristocratic state reinterpreted in absolutist terms, the government and the county subordinated to it against the liberal reformers' claims to a county system based on popular representation and a government responsible to the legislation. His reversed conception of the "unification of interests" had the unprivileged adjust to the privileged, the county to the government, Hungary to the empire, the nobility to the imperial government. His concept of the nation, which was far removed from both the extension of rights and assimilation, was complemented by his perception of the nature and structure of the Hungarian political life, which tallied with the views of Albert Sztáray, Ferenc Kállay, Sándor Lipthay, and Antal Szécsen. The message of Dessewffy's writings was determined by the conservative postulates and the facts of the conservative offensive; his approach to his topics was shaped by his views on the economic conservation and modernization of the nobility's status. The majority of Emil Dessewffy's publicistic writings were namely concerned with economic policy.

Dessewffy, based in Szabolcs county, first expounded his economic plans in his *Letters from the Great Plain* written and published in 1839/40 with supplements added a year later.⁶⁵ He spun on these thoughts in *Provincial ideas*, which he wrote and published in 1843. In 1847 he released two economic political pamphlets: *The Hungarian customs and trade affairs and how to arrange them*, and *Let's pay, as much as we can, to and for ourselves*.⁶⁶ The main purpose of the pamphlets, mostly pieced together from the editorials of *Budapesti Híradó*, was to criticize the customs and trade conception of the liberal reformers as well as the sharing of the taxation burden from a conservative viewpoint.

He wrote that the most important task of the diet is

to modernize the Hungarian nobleman, to lift him out of his barbarous custom of not obeying law and superior, and not paying regularly and as need be for public causes, because as long as he stays where he is, he will belong to the half-modernized nations

Sept. 2, 5, 9, and 12, 1845. See, Kemény (1846), 149, 158–160, 166–168 and Eötvös (1846), 154–176, 232–297. Imre Madách was also among those arguing against the conservatives, first of all Emil Dessewffy, his ideological position being rather radical (Szabad 1983).

⁶⁵ Emil Dessewffy (1842, 1843b).

⁶⁶ Emil Dessewffy (1847a, b).

only... Originally, the Hungarian municipal structure is an *Eastern* institution in its spirit [but it must change substantially] to match the *Western* conditions. Our throes and wriggles are caused by the painful operation our Eastern type and specificity are undergoing, being forced to fuse with the paraphernalia of Western civilization. In this process of fusion the county ... is the amalgamating furnace.⁶⁷

Dessewffy declared that the economic interests and possibilities of the Hungarian nation were determined by its relationship with the empire. "There is nothing to be feared" in this relationship, just as "our natural and only ally," the German nation from whom Hungarians have borrowed our culture (in his opinion), ought not to be feared, either.

These thoughts were put to paper apropos the tariff question. They were meant to prove that an independent Hungarian trade policy was an illusion, and that the German *Zollverein* was no danger to Hungarian economic interests or national existence. The *Zollverein* would not Germanize Hungary, because if Austria entered, it would become the decisive factor in the union. Austria was a multinational empire, and this fact alone would prevent Germanization. Dessewffy argued that they were also crying wolf, claiming that the *Zollverein* would prevent the emergence of a Hungarian middle class; this had not gained strength as yet for lack of capital and not because of the imperial relationship. No middle class could evolve in Hungary, he stated, as long as the country had to fall back upon foreign capital and (with a contemporary term) "foreign mental capacity." The *Zollverein* would ensure greater material well-being, which in turn would promote the rise of a middle class.⁶⁸

The thesis of backwardness and the attraction of being integrated in a larger economic unit—the involuntary and indirect justification of the country's economic subjugation—ran throughout Emil Dessewffy's economic political writings; the prospects and advantages of the customs union of the empire and Hungary were embellished and the risks minimized, while there was no word about guarantees ensuring that the backward empire by western standards, and the even more underdeveloped Hungarian Kingdom, would be treated as equal partners. That Austria would refrain from Germanization was probably true, but the entire area of the *Zollverein* would become Germanized. A middle class would emerge but it would certainly be German. That was the major objection of the liberal reformers, primarily Kossuth, to the customs union with Germany. There is no knowing if Emil Dessewffy was arguing somewhat

⁶⁷ Emil Dessewffy (1843b), 90.

⁶⁸ Emil Dessewffy (1843b), 52–53, 54, 57, 65–66.

thoughtlessly, also deluding himself, or if he was deliberately misleading others. At any rate, according to his argument, he would have relinquished the middle class to the Germans within the German-Hungarian upper and middle class cooperation he envisaged. He confronted his standpoint of "free trade" with some isolated elements of the economic conception of the liberal reformers torn from their context.

In 1847 he argued in a pamphlet on customs and trade that the liberal idea of a protective tariff for promoting Hungarian industry was based on a mistaken assessment of the economic and political situation. Economically, the Hungarian industry had not reached a degree of development that needed protection, and besides, a customs tariff of ten percent would not serve its purpose, and it was politically unfeasible as the relationship with the empire excluded the introduction of an internal protective tariff. Hungary was part of the Habsburg Empire, the argument ran, from which it only differed in legislation and public administration. A part of an empire could not have protective customs against its other parts when their sovereign and government were the same. There had to be free trade without tariffs between the two parts. The shortage of capital in Hungary could be eliminated by the importation of foreign capital and the modernization of the economy, which was conditional upon making Hungary attractive to foreign capital. The economic activity of the empire and prosperity of the more advanced parts would pull less developed Hungary with them. Hungary must be made more livable and attractive through the improvement of the network of transportation, the arrangement of county administration, urban development, and the foundation of savings banks. Political conclusions had to be drawn from the status quo of Hungary and the empire: imperial cohesion must be harmonized with the Hungarian constitution through the government's intention to develop Hungary's economy and, conversely, through the Hungarian nation being loyal to the government without mental reservations.

It is a question of increasing importance: do nation and government understand each other, are their views of the common tasks identical? Do the interests of Hungary and the Hereditary Lands harmonize, flourish side by side, and run in peaceful competition, or are they waging an incessant and desperate war with each other? This question will always have greater significance than how many more or fewer quintals of wheat or cloth have come in or gone out of the country in this or that year.⁶⁹

In other words, Dessewffy's point was that the economic questions were subordinated to the requirements of the political connection. Emil

⁶⁹ Emil Dessewffy (1847a), 42, see also 17, 25–26, 32, 34, 35, 39–40, 71.

Dessewffy's suggestion for an economic policy included free trade within the whole empire, together with the idea of the national savings bank proposed earlier. The capitol of the bank would come from monopolizing the production and sales of tobacco which had long been a state monopoly in the Hereditary Lands, from "revenues from so far untaxed land and classes" (without further specification), and from the raised price of salt, a royal prerogative. This fund would provide credit all over the country as a significant booster of capital accumulation. Hungary's economy had to be modernized through ensuring the possibility of active participation in the imperial division of labor and through the promotion of capital accumulation within the country.⁷⁰

Emil Dessewffy elevated the examination of customs and trade policy to the level of the national economy, which he represented as determined by imperial and extra-imperial conditions. However, he did not examine the determining factors beyond mere reference to them, and he set the unelaborated thesis of the backwardness of Hungarian economy against the thesis of the advanced state of imperial economy, with the extra-imperial national economies wholly ignored or just cited as referential schemes. He supplied generalities in place of the analyses of concrete issues such as the reformist intention of the government, the policy of free trade, the pull of a greater economic unit and more advanced partner, and the backwardness of an underdeveloped economy.

It was not well founded to write about the reformist intentions of the government at a time when the imperial treasurer Kübeck refused to allocate even the minimum amount voted for by the *Staatskonferenz* in support of Széchenyi's river regulation project. To speak of free trade when the customs union within the empire was at issue was an exaggeration. It was an oversimplification to speak of the pull of a more advanced partner when the empire was also reduced to foreign capital and was fairly underdeveloped by European standards. The backwardness of the Hungarian economy owed its origin and persistence largely to the country's subordinated position, to the task assigned to it in the imperial division of labor, and from the more recent economic measures as well.

Dessewffy was giving a distorted image of the liberal reformers' economic political conception when he judged its essence to be the protective tariff and autarchy. The economic political conception that can be gleaned

⁷⁰ Emil Dessewffy (1847a), 92, 93–94. Cf.: [Anonymous], *A gabonatörvényekben miképp áll a pro et contra* [Pros and cons of Corn Laws], *BH*, July 12, 1846 (London, June 17, 1846).

from the reports of the trade committee of the 1834/44 diet and from liberal publicistic writings was not aimed at isolation at all but turned to the Hereditary Lands with the proposal of a customs union. The liberals did not start out from the necessity of a protective tariff. Instead, they posited that the economic self-enclosure of the entire empire was also detrimental to the Austrian half, and doubly injurious to Hungary. It was detrimental because it shut off the country's economy from more advanced western partners and created a monopoly position for the Austrian industry that was far less developed. The solution would be the termination of the internal monopoly, and autarchy at the same time, to be replaced by free trade. If the government was averse to this complex solution, attempts should focus at least at the elimination of the monopoly position within the empire, a tool of which—for want of something better—was the protective tariff. Since Hungary was an agrarian country, inchoate middle-class development severely restricted by feudal bonds could be promoted by the abolition of the landlord–peasant relationship, general taxation for all, and the easing of the influx of foreign capital, and thus the emergence of a national economy could be facilitated. As part of this overall goal, the demand for industrialization and the boosting of trade appeared in the concrete forms of social organizations, which also badly needed direct communication with foreign countries and the elimination of the artificially sustained Austrian monopoly.⁷¹

The main propositions of the liberal reformers's economic policy, such as free trade, the abolition of feudal bonds, the elimination of market monopoly at home, free choice of partners, and a customs union between the Hereditary Lands and Hungary (or at least the protection of inchoate Hungarian industry with protective tariffs), were constructed in view of the backwardness of the empire within Europe and of Hungary within the

⁷¹ [Ágoston Trefort], "A B. P. Híradó, Hetilap és mi a vámügyben [*BH*, *Hetilap*, and our customs]," *PH*, July 2, 1846; idem, "A B. P. Híradó nemzetgazdái [The national economists of *BH*]," *PH*, Nov. 13, 1846; idem, "A B. P. Híradó s a magyar kereskedelmi társaság [The *BH* and the Hungarian trade society]," *PH*, Nov. 15, 1846; idem, "A B. P. Híradó pénzügyei [The finances of *BH*]," pts. 1–5, *PH*, July 8, 9, 11, 13, Aug. 31, 1847; idem, "Pénzügyi taktika [Financial tactics]," *PH*, Sept. 5, 1847; [Anonymous], "Ne ámitsunk [Let's not bluff]," *Hetilap* [*H*], May 26, 1846; [Anonymous], "Pártok ország-gazdászati kérdéseinkben [Parties on questions of national economy]," *H*, July 10, 1846; [Anonymous], "Indusztrializmus és a negáció emberei [Industrialism and the men of negation]," *H*, Oct. 23, 1846; [Anonymous], "Nevezük nevén a gyermeket [Let's call a spade a spade]," *H*, Dec. 1, 1846; Lajos Kossuth, "A teendőik legfőbbike [The most important task]," *H*, July 28, 1846; Lajos Kossuth, "Adó [Tax]," *H*, Dec. 15, 1846. Cf. Szabad (1977), 83–95, (1986), 21–27 and Varga (1982a), 115–141.

empire. The customs union was the economic aspect of the liberal reformers' overall political conception which raised the idea of a federation of states and wished to see constitutionality ensured in the Hereditary Lands as well. It was the attempt of the Hungarian liberals, who had no state of their own, to push back imperial absolutism, to lay practical grounds for an independent state and a modern national economy. The politicians of the reformist opposition challenged the perspective of imperial integration, discerning signs of an integrative policy also devised to promote the emerging imperial market, but without any knowledge of Metternich's conception. By contrast, Emil Dessewffy criticized and branded the protective tariff by distorting the whole conception of the liberal reformers and tearing it from its context. He expropriated it by generalizing and verbally diluting the rest of the liberal economic conception.

Dessewffy countered this when it came to the liberal demand for general and proportionate taxation, that is, taxation of the nobility. This question is explicated in his pamphlet *Let's pay, as much as we can, to and for ourselves*. He dedicated it to the Conservative Party, his "honorable comrades," on September 20, 1847, in Pest.

In his opinion, the weakening of authority and the enhanced feeling of backwardness led to the false assessment of the situation and the spread of misconceptions. Authorities had to be strengthened and backwardness eliminated. The more so, as unregulated capitalism was destroying the nation sustaining nobility and thus endangering the nation. Capitalism—according to Dessewffy's solution—had to be carried on in such a way that it should strengthen, and not destroy, the nobility. The taxation of the nobility, which the liberals proposed, was unnecessary because that would not solve the country's problems and would disastrously weaken the financial standing of the nobility. The whole of the economy would have to be given a firm footing—and that would lay a charge on everyone, not only on the nobility. The modernization of the economy on the whole would mean the accumulation of the necessary capital, which would boost the production of the economy and improve the situation of all the classes of society.⁷²

⁷² Emil Dessewffy (1847b), 122–124; idem, "Magyar financia s úrbéri örökváltáság és holmi egyebek [Hungarian finances and redemption, among other things]," pts. 1–13, *BH*, June 1, 4, 6, 8, 11, 13, 15, 25, 27, 29, July 2, 4, and 27, 1847; idem, "Indirekt adó [Indirect tax]," *BH*, July 27, 1847; idem, "Magyar financia, további indoklás [Hungarian finances, further reasons]," *BH*, Aug. 13, 1847; idem, "Magyar financia, taktika különbözései [Differences in Hungarian finances, tactics]," *BH*, Aug. 15, 1847; idem, "Magyar financia, némi ellenvetések és részletek felderítése [Hungarian finances, some counter arguments and details]," *BH*, Aug. 17, 1847.

Instead of the general and proportionate tax burdens, Emil Dessewffy proposed a—vaguely defined—indirect taxation of the nobility. Modernizing the country's economy meant taking a larger share in the labor division of the empire, settling domestic matters, introducing law and order, and sharing proportionately in the tax burdens. The share in the imperial labor division meant joining the customs union and becoming the exporter of agricultural products to the empire. The enforcement of law and order could be understood from the conservative offensive. What the proportionate share of burdens meant is little known, but what it did not mean, taxation of the nobility, was clear. Modernizing his estate at Olysó-Büdszentmihály to the detriment of his peasants, the Szabolcs county aristocrat advocated a reversed unification of interests, and the conservation and modernization of the system of privileges.⁷³

The support for the imperial labor division lacked guarantees, which was not accidental, because the propaganda of the customs union in the hope of a sure agrarian market for the modernizing large estates would entail the economic integration in the empire and the promotion of an imperial market instead of the emergence of a national economy. The proportionate share in taxation suggests that the costs of modernization were to have been devolved upon the unprivileged, both in theory and in the practice of his own estate. Referring to the advocates of "no taxation" as a deterrent was far from proposing the cessation of the nobility's exemption from taxation, but his recommendations of a separate taxation of the nobility were closer to Albert Sztáray's concept. Similarly, in Emil Dessewffy's ideology, the core of the nation was the nobility, and the nobility was tantamount to the landowning aristocracy, hence the propertyless common nobles did not belong to the nobility. He urged for the increase of the economic weight and political representation of the landowning aristocracy. He provided "large political" arguments and "realities" in support of his economic concept. However, his rudimentary ideas were determined by the provincialism of local rural politics, and by the narrow viewpoint of projecting down to earth local interests onto imperial dimensions.

Emil Dessewffy decided not to give up his post as chief editor of *Budapesti Híradó* for the chair of *főispán* of Szabolcs, because he thought he could better serve the conservative cause as a publicist.⁷⁴ In his memoirs

⁷³ Andics (1952–1981), 1:59–61, 122–127.

⁷⁴ Emil Dessewffy to Máty, Pest, Sept. 7, 1844, MOL., DcsI, Acta Publica, Political writings of Emil Dessewffy, Letters. Cf. *ibid.*, Dessewffy Emil to Jósika Samu and Apponyi György (Pest, Nov. 30, 1844). For a printed version, see Andics (1952–1981) 3:140–

of 1866, Menyhért Lónyay had a high opinion of Dessewffy's activity as a political writer, but a close analysis of his writings does not verify this praise.⁷⁵ He was perhaps the most unrefined of the leading conservative publicists apart from Sztáray, but all of them had a fairly narrow vision compared to many other contemporary political writers. His concepts of nation and economy were determined by the defense and modernization of the system of privileges.

Two Liberal Interpretations

Hungarian conservative journalism—both in the explicitly constitution protecting *Nemzeti Újság* and the cautiously progressive *Budapesti Híradó*—rejected in principle the disruption and abolition of the system of privileges, capitalism, and self-government. This position rested on anthropological pessimism, epistemological skepticism, a realistic appraisal of the balanced relations of the great powers in Europe, conclusions from the models of western development, and an assessment of the possibilities at home. Implicitly and explicitly alike, the basic premise or axiom was that hierarchical stratification could not be eliminated from the human world and that the innovators unbidden and incompetent call for changes would only reproduce at lower levels the same hierarchical stratification.

The theses and axioms of the self-identification of conservatives can be reduced to the antithetical pairs of aristocracy and democracy, quality and quantity, order and anarchy, loyalty and separatism, imperial contact and defiant opposition, organic development and utopianism, realism and passions, and many more could be listed. The publicists of the conservative offensive set the unquestionable character of absolutistic government (based on feudal municipalism, monarchic legality, and effective public administration) against the requirements of modern parliamentarianism and the legitimacy of self-determination, which were separation of powers, popular representation, and responsible government—all in the name of “order above parties.” The liberal reformers's initiatives to abolish the privileges and introduce the civil rights of liberty and property for all were

141. Eleonóra Sztáray was the mother of the Dessewffy brothers, Júlia Sztáray was the wife of György Apponyi, and Albert Sztáray was the uncle of the four Dessewffy siblings (Aurél, Marcell, Virginia, and Emil). A systematic exploration of the kinship relations is still to be accomplished.

⁷⁵ Dénes (1988), 169–195. Cf. Cieger (2007).

answered by conservative journalism's defense and modernization of the system of privileges. The liberal idea of assimilating through the extension of civil rights elicited the rejection of both emancipation and assimilation by the conservative writers. Their position was based on the traditional aristocratic concept of the nation identified with the propertied nobility, the strategy of mobility by individual rise, and a viewpoint focused on the peak of the state.

Liberal political writer László Szalay wrote in 1845:

The gentlemen have no concrete idea of government; for when we ask them to give us a version of the kind of government they are proposing, they tell us that these are fruitless issues as far as we [Hungarians] are concerned, that we should forget about our circumstances, should keep to our roles, and should not imagine ourselves to be French or English journalists ... An entire ocean separates these gentlemen and us, not because they are not statesmen, but because they believe themselves to be constitutional statesmen, something they will, thus, never become as long as they live, just as a prisoner, who believes himself at liberty ... shall never be free.⁷⁶

It was likely Kossuth who, under the pseudonym Mihály Bábolnai, elaborated in *Hungarian Appeals* the differences between the conservative and liberal reformist parties, especially in response to the conservative attacks against the extension of civil rights to defend the Magyar nationality:

The question we raise is not "how" but "for what purpose" ... We want freedom of the press, trial by jury, popular representation, redemption of feudal duties because we want a constitution and a free nation. The conservatives do not want free speech, jury, popular representation, redemption; but they want strict control over the intellectuals and the ideas; they want seigneurial courts (what else is the county, town, court? etc.), the legislative monopoly of the aristocracy, and the feudal system because they do not want a constitution, or a free nation. The Hungarian aristocracy may no longer hold back the state, for the spirit of the nineteenth century understands something different by statehood than the banderial system of our late God-fearing ancestors of great merit ... And the Hungarian aristocracy, so far the alpha and omega of our statehood, begins to feel that the old foundations are rocking under its feet, that ... it must negotiate, and in the interest of the aristocracy, to boot ... the liberals want to negotiate with *the people* in order to sustain the constitution, the nation and the independent statehood as ensured by the laws of the country. The aristocrats, by contrast, close their eyes, not concerning themselves with the people, and rather negotiate with *the Austrian government*, sacrificing constitution, nation, and the legal independence of the country to vegetate for a little more time. This is the essential difference between our policies ... We are looking at the matters of our country from a Hungarian window, and they are peeping out of a window in Austria.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Szalay (1845). See also, Eötvös (1846), 150–175.

⁷⁷ Bábolnai (1846), 246–247.

They are only *pretending* to acknowledge the need for progress, for they wish to play for time thereby; they opine that winning time is winning all, and a lucky accident may jolt back the wheel of the state into the old feudal rut. It is to be feared, however, and the accumulating signs appear to confirm, that while we are quarreling about our isolated constitutional battle array, behind our backs a new spirit and new tendency is evolving in the millions outside the constitution, this spirit and tendency emerging in reaction to the centuries of feudal despotism is not our tendency or our spirit. Will there be human power that can set the limit to this tendency and this spirit, and command: "To this point and no further!" Verily I tell you, if we do not go voluntarily, we will have to go contrary to our will, whether we negotiate or not. *Fourteen million rightless children of the Hungarian country are demanding rights for themselves.* True, this claim is not manifest in applications, meetings, and similar demonstrations, but they are manifest in the popular movement against feudal dues, their antipathy to the aristocracy, and their dissatisfaction with their destiny in the urgent constitutional and material questions of the age, in the growing awareness of the non-noble masses, in the anti-nationality movements, in the exorbitant number of those without rights, and—let's not forget about it—in the inanity of the aristocracy. *Fourteen million people are demanding rights.* Can there be a more cogent argument against the day-to-day policies of the conservatives? The country, the nation, and the constitution will either be sustained by these fourteen million people or we have to resign from the future of country, constitution, and nation.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Bábolnai (1846), 247–250. Kossuth overestimated the size of the population. It is not clear from the text who or what he refers to in speaking of the anti-nationality movements.

Party Programs (1846–1847)

Gyula Szekfű pronounced in *Three generations* and in *Hungarian history* that in the age of Reform, the programs of the Opposition and Conservative Parties were only differentiated by their tones and not by their essence. This statement is still a commonplace in today's historical and political literature and journalism.¹ Is it indeed true that the quintessence of both platforms were pressing for reforms, there was a difference in tone only? Before a well-grounded answer can be attempted, let us take a closer look at the program documents of the Conservative and Opposition Parties of 1846/47, devoting equal attention to the positions of both sides to be able to compare them.

The Program of the Conservatives

Among the precedents for the foundation of the Conservative Party that can be listed are the conservative club with Aurél Dessewffy as president in August 1841, the political writings in *Világ*, *Budapesti Híradó*, and *Nemzeti Újság*, the Society for the Common Good (*Gyűlde*) founded by Sándor Liphay in the autumn of 1845, and the work of the committee in charge of elaborating the establishment of the prospective Conservative Party. The committee was headed by Count Antal Szécsen and included Count Emil Dessewffy, Count Gábor Keglevich, Bishop Mihály Fogarassy, Sándor Liphay, Sándor Luka, György Mailáth, Jr., Pál Somssich, and Baron Miklós Vay.²

In Somssich's view, it was indispensable for the effective work of the party to obtain trust in the conservative readiness for reforms. The liberal opposition was jeopardizing historical rights, ignoring the throne and the

¹ Szekfű (1922), 195–198; (1933), 153, 162–166, 428. Cf. Ballagi (1897), 693–707, Menczer (1972), István Deák (1979), 54–56, Schlett (1999), 266–302, Takáts (2007), 49–51, Gyurgyák (2007) 51–54, and Békés (2007). See also: Gyurgyák (2009) and Csizmadia (2009)

² Varga (1983), 112; “Gróf Dessewffy Emil könyomatos beszámolója az 1846. november 12-i konzervatív konferenciáról [Count Emil Dessewffy's lithographed report of the conservative conference on Nov. 12, 1846],” Pest, Nov. 14, 1846, MOL, Dcslt, Acta Publica, Political writings of Emil Dessewffy, documents, letters, drafts concerning the Conservative Party. There are many quotations from this document in Horváth (1886), 3:183–199, esp. 184. For the entire report in print, see Andics (1952–1981), 3:206–216, esp. 206, 207, 211. Cf. Varga (1982b), 1202–1203.

government, threatening the aristocracy and the proprietary rights, and therefore they were destructive and anarchistic. The proposed party was to stand on the basis of historical rights, to protect the sanctity of property, and to cooperate with the government for the sake of reforms, thus it would be conservative and pro-government. The question was—he pointed out—how to reform, and not if reform was necessary. Who was to give the program—Somssich asked—the government or the party? If the government proposed the program, conflicts might arise among those who are so far loyal to it, but if the government continued to voice its intention to reform in general, the guarantee of the reform would be the persons of the statesmen and hence loyalty would not be marred. If the government did not release a program, the loyalty to the government would remain but it would require commitment haphazardly. Since the goal was the creation of a pro-government majority and the quashing of the opposition, first the government should release the program and the party should then be organized in support of it to win the credence of the public. The conservatives had no credence so far because the government and its supporters had reduced their activity to exposing the opposition's faults and still owed the definition of a program that the government was to carry out. Even if it was not prudent for the government to commit itself to a detailed program—Somssich argued—it would be correct and necessary to present the most important priorities.

He divided the tasks to be accomplished into three groups. One group contained the tasks that the public was already aware of (town representatives of the diet, credit bank, redemption of billeting, and mining laws). The second included those that were the moot questions of the period (more equitable distribution of taxes, better transportation for the promotion of trade, modification of *aviticitas*, and redemption of feudal obligations). The third contained issues that were currently emerging as problems.

Somssich proposed two methods for the government to let its intention known: either the chancellor should inform the *főispán* of his ideas concerning the next diet and the *főispán* should call on the municipal authorities and the conservative party for support, or he should detail the tasks in the form of bills to be included in the royal letter of convocation issued well before the diet and the conservatives were involved in elaborating these bills.³

³ [Pál Somssich], "Igénytelen nézetek a Konzervatív Pártnak alakítása ... iránt [Modest ideas about the establishment of a Conservative Party]," MOL, Dcslt, Acta Publica, Political writings of Emil Dessewffy, Documents, letter, drafts concerning the Conservative Party.

Compared to Pál Somssich's memorandum, which contained doubts and problems as well, Antal Szécsen's was definitive and resolute. He also made it clear that the reforms of the legislation had to be initiated by the government and the party was looking forward to the government's initiative with great expectations. It was not the party's job to put forth detailed reform proposals, he claimed, but it was to formulate certain general principles as guidelines independently of the government's action, and the party should also make recommendations on newly arising questions. These included guaranteeing the freedom of discussion by getting rid of the pressure on the participants from those who had no deliberative rights; revision of lawful rights while linking up their extension with guarantees of law and order; discussing the means to promote the country's material upswing from practical, constitutional, and non-theoretical viewpoints; partially reforming the penal code, improving the conditions of jails; and making sure that any legislative move affecting the prevalent relations of landowning aristocracy was conditional upon full compensation. The party had to defend the freedom of speech; and since it was the opposition that jeopardized it, and not the government, the party had to defend it from the opposition.⁴

In Sándor Liphay's view, the collaboration had finally been established between the Conservative Party and the government when it became clear that the government would not negotiate with the opposition. The Conservative Party should proclaim itself to be the government party and the government should acknowledge it as such, as well. This idea was included in the appendix attached to the program proposal. It was evident

⁴ [Antal Szécsen], "Cím nélküli elaborátum [Untitled proposal]," MOL, Deslt, Acta Publica, Political writings of Emil Dessewffy, Documents, letters, drafts concerning the Conservative Party. [Antal Szécsen], "Az 1843/44-ik évi országgyűlés [The diet of 1843/44]," pts. 1 and 2, *BH*, Dec. 26 and 27, 1844; idem, "Közügyeink [Our public matters]," *BH*, Jan. 19, 1845; idem, "Figyelmeztetés az átalakítók legújabb nemének ferdeségeire [Warning against the mistakes of the new efforts of the transformers]," *BH*, Mar. 20, 1845; idem, "Polémia [Polemics]," *BH*, July 29, 1845; idem, "Pest, aug. 3. 1845," *BH*, Aug. 3, 1845; idem, "Honoráciorok [Non-noble intellectuals]," pts. 1 and 2, *BH*, Aug. 12 and 15, 1845; idem, "A horvát bonyodalmak [The Croatian problems]," pts. 1–4, *BH*, Jan. 11, 13, 16, and 18, 1846; idem, "Még egy szó a horvát ügyekről [One more word about the Croatian matters]," *BH*, Feb. 5, 1846; idem, "Gr(óf) Széchenyi Istvánnak egy új munkája jelent meg" [A new work published by Count Széchenyi]," *BH*, Feb. 28, 1847; idem, "Régi közmondás [Old proverb]," *BH*, Mar. 4, 1847; idem, "A tanácskozási rendnek fenntartása... [Maintaining the order of procedure]," *BH*, Mar. 9, 1847; idem, "Midőn néhány hét előtt... [When a few weeks ago]," *BH*, May 11, 1847; idem, "Azon észrevételek... [The arguments]," *BH*, June 4, 1847.

that Lipthay identified the Conservative Party—the party of the government—with the party in support of aristocratic stability. The program proposal declared publicly that the Conservative Party had been founded for the purpose of getting the legislature to enact the bills initiated by the government and other reforms with a view to the basic constitutional principle, the nation, and the unity with the empire. That this step would bring about the opposition's organization into a party of their own would not hold the conservatives back from establishing themselves as a Conservative Party. The aim was to have a majority. Since the opposition insisted on reforms on the basis of its own principles and attitudes, excluding the conservatives, this position had to be reversed and reforms carried through in a conservative manner with a conservative majority, in defiance of the opposition. The Conservative Party was loyal to the government as long as it was going on this course, guided by the statesmen in office, but it also expected the government to proclaim cooperation with the Conservative Party. The chief editor of *Nemzeti Újság* summed up, saying, "All [support] the government identifying with our principle and opinion, none [are] against the acting government as long as we see it progressing along the roads congruent with our views and principles." The idea at hand was that the Conservative Party wished to provide the majority for the government; therefore the government should take over the helm of the party. Although the latter part of the quote was omitted from the final draft of the program, the rest of the presented program proposals were included in it (Lipthay's with some corrections and extensions by Emil Dessewffy). What was also omitted was Lipthay's memorandum, which contained detailed recommendations for the organization and running of the party, revealing that the county administrators would have to do their utmost to achieve a pro-government majority with money and influence.⁵

The final draft had no trace of Somssich's reservations; it was predominated by Szécsen's proposal and first of all Lipthay's presentation serving as the foundation for the program. The final variant modified and corrected by Emil Dessewffy was read out at the inaugural meeting of the Conservative Party on November 12, 1846, which was hosted and chaired by the country's chief treasurer, Count Gábor Keglevich. Antal Szécsen and Emil

⁵ [Sándor Lipthay], "Konzervatív pártalkotási program okadatolás [Reasons for the program of founding the Conservative Party]," and "Konzervatív pártalkotási program [Program of the Conservative Party]," MOL, Dcslt, Acta Publica, Political writings of Emil Dessewffy, Documents, letters, drafts concerning the Conservative Party. Cf. [Emil Dessewffy], "Konzervatív pártprogram [Conservative party program]," OSZKK, Analecta 11085.

Dessewffy held speeches at the meeting. Antal Szécsen summed up the opinions of the members of the preparatory committee, as well as the goals and reasons for the foundation, paving the way for the reading of the program. This fact—and Mihály Horváth's narrative—may have caused the program to be linked to Antal Szécsen, whereas it was read by Emil Dessewffy.⁶ After some stylistic modifications, the participants approved of the text and it was declared the official program of the Conservative Party.⁷

Both Szécsen's preliminary explanations and the program read by Dessewffy served to designate the precise position of the Conservative Party, which was at the other end of the spectrum from the opposition, in support of the reform initiatives they ascribed to the government, or, more precisely, for the enactment of the bills tabled during the 1843/44 diet (and awaiting sanction or not yet submitted for assent because of the conflicts between the two houses). Szécsen argued that the reform had been trapped in a vicious circle in Hungary that would have to be broken. Ever since the question of reforms entered the agenda beside the traditional grievances, he argued, the traditional oppositionist majority in the lower house was obstructing the implementation of the reforms, because the opposition did not regard the government as constitutional. The government, on the other hand, could not join forces with the opposition because permitting the enactment of the reforms in the spirit of the opposition would mean that it surrendered to the opposition. As long as the lower house of the diet was predominated by the opposition, reforms could not be achieved; there could be no reconciliation between the traditional anti-government mistrust of the opposition and the necessary and desirable authority of the government. The conservatives wished to break out of this vicious circle by creating a dietal majority in support of the government, thereby making the legislative machinery responsive to the government's reform initiatives.⁸

⁶ Horváth (1886), 3:183–199, esp. 184, Andics (1952–1981), 3:206–216, and Varga (1982b), 1202–1203.

⁷ [Sándor Liphay], “Konzervatív pártalkotási program okadatolás [Reasons for the program of establishing the Conservative Party],” and “Konzervatív pártalkotási program [Program of the Conservative Party],” MOL, DcsI, Acta Publica, Political writings of Emil Dessewffy. Documents, letters, drafts concerning the Conservative Party; [Emil Dessewffy], “Konzervatív pártprogram [Conservative party program],” OSZKK, Analecta 11085; MOL, Magyar Kancellária Levéltára, Informations-Protocole der Ungarisch-Siebenbürgischen Section. XV. 1846. II. XL. 56–62. Cf. Bártfai (1943), 2:557–558, 592–594.

⁸ Horváth (1886), 3:184–191, Andics (1952–1981), 3:206–211, and Pajkossy (2006c), 176–185, 194–197.

Antal Szécsen's line of argument illustrates the situation at and after the 1843/44 diet in a somewhat abstract and one-sided manner. The crisis of confidence, the conflict between the lower house majority and the government, was namely the outcome of the demand for the fundamental requirement of modern parliamentarianism—the representative government—and its lack. The core of the conflict was that the legislature had no possibility to dismiss a government that was not answerable to it. Szécsen's reasoning progressed in a retrograde motion: if the legislature did not obey the government, the legislature would have to be dismissed and replaced by a new legislative body. A pro-government dietal majority was necessary for the functioning of the government's exclusive right to introduce bills, and the Conservative Party was founded to aid effective politics or "order above parties."

Szécsen set honest dependence against the opposition's demand for independence, which was not quite unfounded if taken as synonymous with respect for authority and a sort of political realism. The sanctity of property, and the preservation of the constitutional power and validity of the government were guarantees of rational progress, and the moderating influence of the estates was the primary safeguard of stability, he declared.

The phrases "sanctity of property," "constitutional power and validity of the government," and the "moderating influence of the estate" can be interpreted on the basis of conservative journalistic writings. The protection of property meant feudal property, while the liberal reformers were intent on creating the conditions for modern bourgeois proprietary rights. The constitutional power and validity of the government meant, "order above parties," monarchic will not even theoretically limitable by the diet, and the almost unlimited power of the government. The moderating influence of the estate implied that the large landed estate—which was delimiting the process of capitalism by its existence—was untouchable, and this idea was at the core of their interpretation of the English and French modernizing models. The phrases together signified the protection of the system of privileges and absolutism. The "principle of nationality" had a dual meaning in Szécsen's presentation: the nation as appropriated by the opposition, but actually professed by everyone, meant the national, constitutional, and administrative independence of Hungary, while the second meaning (only embraced by the conservatives) indicated the connection with the empire. Thus, implicitly, Szécsen accused the liberal reformers of separatism and demagogy, praising the pro-government party for its political sobriety and realism.

Somewhat removed from the principles of the conservatives were the views on the moderating effect of landownership (as the chief guarantee of stability), which was also a guarantee of order and explained the doctrine of the sanctity of property. From among the theses of the traditional constitution protecting position, only the thesis of the country's constitutional separation was mentioned by Szécsen, with the remark that it had to be listed lest the opposition should flaunt it as its sole possession.

Thus, the Conservative Party's aim at creating a legislative majority in support of the government was based on respect of authority, the enforcement of law and order, and political realism. Rather mythically, Szécsen identified "good" with the government and "evil" with the opposition. Instead of real parliamentarianism, he wanted to create the "appearance of parliamentarianism"—in the service of absolutism, to boot. There was no concrete reform idea in Szécsen's speech. As the token for the implementation of the necessary (and generalized) improvements, he listed his theses in support of the government's claim to initiate reforms and repress the opposition. Thus, the objective set to the followers of the established party was to win a majority in the diet.

The twelve-point program declared that the party relied on the constitutional basis of the body politic, and its aim was to carry on the modern transformation of Hungary in line with the government's propositions at the 1843 diet and conservative principles.⁹ The conservatives would not be deterred from founding their party if the opposition also set up their own organization in response. The duty of the party members was to pursue their activity in order to win constitutional majority. There was no possibility to negotiate with the opposition as they insisted on laws exclusively in their spirit, therefore their motions would have to be voted down and their useful ideas would have to be reworked in a conservative spirit. The Conservative Party identified itself with the government, as it was progressing along a constitutional and legal course, and its leaders were the guarantee that it would stick to this course. The party would also like to have the government declare its allegiance with the conservatives. The opposition had committed itself against the government while the conservatives took its side. The conservatives would hold one or more meetings a year with as much sympathetic attendance as possible, when the date of the next session would be fixed and the assignments distributed. At the national level the adherents of the party, while at county level the local

⁹ Its 12 points were influenced by Széchenyi's *Stádium* and the program of the radical liberals of Szatmár County.

conservatives, were to ensure a majority of conservatives. The main task facing the conservatives was to have the government introduced legislative bills enacted in a conservative spirit. That, in turn, required a conservative majority in the diet. The conservatives hoped that the government officials would let them know their detailed expectations of the diet, to which they could offer their cooperation.¹⁰

The program listed the same conservative principles, though it was more abbreviated than Szécsen's statutory address. The bulk of the concrete items to be put on the agenda were identical with several motions tabled at the 1843/44 diet that were stymied by the resistance of the government and the upper house. Now, they were incorporated into the conservative program.

The source from which the contents of the proposed innovations are known is not the program itself but Emil Dessewffy's lithographed circulars concerning the later conservative conferences (first of all those held in June and September of 1847).¹¹

The conservatives grouped the proposed subjects into two categories: one containing those that had been agreed upon and were awaiting sanctioning, the other comprising the pending or quite new questions. According to Emil Dessewffy's circular of June 14, 1847, agreement had been reached on the issue of the quartering of troops, the improvement of prison conditions, the penal code, and the mining laws. Still pending, or new, were the following questions: freedom of expression at public discussions, peaceful and gradual termination of feudal bonds, the voting of royal towns and districts, and new resources to cover the public needs of the country.

At the conservative conference in June 1847, the participants defined their attitude to the reform issues they deemed topical, and the conservative meeting summoned on September 20, 1847 corroborated the June statement in a resolution and extended the reform issues by vaguely alluding to the dietal votes of the chapters and reiterating the need for a national savings fund (often raised—and confused with—as a counter argument to general taxation).

Ensuring the freedom of speech in political debates meant, in the conservative interpretation, the tightening up of the order of procedure and the elimination of the presumed or real pressure of growing public opinion (those not entitled to political discussion). Thus free speech was tanta-

¹⁰ Andics (1952–1981), 3:211–216.

¹¹ Andics (1952–1981), 3:274–277, 285–288.

mount to the liberty (or, more precisely, privilege) of expressing the conservative views on the basis of a strong-handed control of oppositionist popularity. As regards the elimination of feudal bonds, the conservative proposal focused on the elimination of the external obstacles to the optional manumission compensation enacted in 1840 (without much effect), while it left untouched the basic requirements of the abolition of feudal bonds such as *aviticitas*. Concerning the issue of the dietal votes of royal towns and their municipal structure, the conservatives repeated their earlier standpoint at a more abstract level. It was not popular representation but the creation of a pro-government majority in the diet that the conservative proposal to extend the voting rights of the chapters was implicitly promoting. The issue of the national savings bank, commonly confused with the assertion of the principle of general taxation, remained a vague idea imposing no obligations on the nobility, let alone resignation from tax exemption.

Thus, the Conservative Party introduced the following topics for the expected conservative majority of the diet: the cash redemption of the billeting and provisioning of troops, the mining code, the establishment of a model prison; informing the diet of certain figures of the country's customs relations by the government; regulation of the procedure of dietal deliberation; removal of the obstacles in the way of optional redemption of all peasant servitudes; increase in the weight of royal towns and chapters in the diet and regulation of the municipal structure of towns as proposed by the conservatives at the 1843/44 diet; and finally, the establishment of a national savings bank.

The Conservative Party's introduced topics for the expected conservative majority of the diet were seconded in part by the memorandum of György Apponyi, the new Hungarian chancellor. The memorandum, written on January 8, 1847, included the following issues concerning the recommendations for the monarch's presentations: mining code, provisions of the army, settling the matters of the thirtieth tax, eliminating the inner tariff between Hungary and Austria (with feelers to test the reaction to the taxation of the nobility and the introduction of the tobacco monopoly), improvement of traffic, foundation of a mortgage bank, and pruning the detrimental outgrowths of *aviticitas*. The aim of these moves was to help Hungary come abreast of the Hereditary Lands—not overnight but as the outcome of a slow process. Law and order in the Kingdom of Hungary was to be created first of all at the diet and the counties, by regulating the order of consultative procedure, settling the question of the voting right of the deputies of towns and chapters, restricting the votes of those absent

and first of all the voice of the gallery, and regulating the administrative and legislative authority of the counties. The restoration of the authority of the supreme power was the target of the report by the committee on a new criminal code that would guarantee the security of the state and respect for the executive power with the rigor of the law. This was also to be promoted by the bill on the regulation of societies and associations. Apponyi's memorandum (listing long-term goals) included the annexation of the Partium, the facilitation of redeeming the feudal bonds, making a religious law, and establishing a model prison (which he himself had urged for in the upper house of the previous diet). The chancellor stressed he was aware that only a part of the issued list could be enacted during the diet, and that would also be a great achievement.¹² It is not surprising that the royal propositions read out in Pozsony on November 12, 1847 did not touch on each of these issues.¹³

There was concord concerning both the content and the omissions between the planned innovations of the Conservative Party aiming to win dietal majority in support of the government and the propositions of the chancellor preparing the king's rescript for the dietal agenda. The list of proposed reforms did not include governmental responsibility and guarantees thereof, nor a resolute plan to emancipate the peasantry and to introduce general taxation—in other words the reforms that would have been instrumental in abolishing absolutism and the system of privileges were missing.

The apology of the feudal system, manifest in the conservative journalistic writings—the presentation of the peasant and landlord relation (manorialism) as basically good and to be retained—was present in the program documents as well. These relations were characterized in detail in a *Budapesti Híradó* article series. It stated that the Hungarian peasant lived better than the peasantry in the surrounding countries and his living conditions would further improve through industry, obedience, and the performance of duties instead of changes in the constitution or the extension of rights. All that the redemption of one's feudal obligations would result in was a change of overlords, for the peasant was still immature. In the anonymous author's view, there could be no absolute happiness on earth; the Hungarian peasant's fate was intolerable only in the eye of the oppositionist journalists of Pest, but not in reality. The article accused the oppositionist journalists of fueling social dissatisfaction and hatred with

¹² Andics (1952–1981), 3:218–249; cf. Bártfai (1943), 2:570–571.

¹³ *Ogy.-i irományok* (1847/48) 4–6.

their visions, whereas superordination and subordination was unavoidable in society and these relations must be improved, not eradicated.¹⁴ Likewise, the party's program documents had no trace of reform proposals to abolish the basic feudal relationship, but they contained several suggestions on how it could survive and be modernized, and how to ensure the absolutist government. Instead of calling for the abolition of *aviticitas*, the conservative program urged for its retention in a modified form.

Making order—that is, fortifying the system of privileges—was at the core of the Conservative Party's and the government's reform initiatives. The steps aimed to win public opinion remind one more of directives to government officials than of arguments to persuade the public. The conservative journalism and program documents did not serve cautious progress but rather the promotion of the cause of privileges to the rank of a political cause of the community. Somssich's claim to authenticity was the exception to the rule, which was represented by Szécsen's elaboration, Liphay's preparatory writings, and the journalism of the conservative offensive.

In Transylvania, the conservatives managed to realize their ideas of *cautious progress*, *law and order*, and *order above parties* in the mid-1840s. Through the regulation of the peasants' duties, and the consolidation of holdings and lands for want of a manorial law, the possibility of the emancipation of peasants was put off for a generation's time. The rate of the peasants' tenements was changed to their detriment through the introduction of technical innovations. The official power was called in to transform the internal stratification of the peasantry. Poor nobles were mobilized against the liberal opposition and the moderate liberals were disarmed. The Romanian national demands were ignored. The chancellor of Transylvania, Samu Jósika, was an excellent and uninhibited power technician. His motto, "*Et si omnes ego non*" [Even though all may be for it, yet I will not], was that of a *diehard conservative* rather than a *neo-conservative*. Capitalizing on the impotence of imperial leadership and their fear of the union with Hungary, he acted with a free hand. As a result, the model state of the conservatives epitomized the progress of crude power, a political force to modernize the feudal system instead of the extension of rights or assimilation.¹⁵

¹⁴ XX. [Anonymous], "Helyzetünk s a legsürgetőbb reformok [Our situation and the most urgent reforms]," pts. 1–27, *BH*, Oct. 25, 27, Nov. 13, 22, 27, 29, Dec. 24, 1846, Jan. 1, 3, 19, 26, 31, Feb. 5, 9, 26, Mar. 2, May 4, 7, 14, 18, 21, 23, 27, 28, 30, July 23, and 25, 1847

¹⁵ Ambrus Miskolczy (1987), 1332–1341.

According to Emil Dessewffy's report, the inaugural meeting was attended by one hundred and twenty-five people. The list of the participants included some who eventually did not become members of the party such as Count István Széchenyi and Baron József Eötvös. It is also known that lower ranking civil servants were ordered to be present. On the other side, it is also to be considered that the inaugural meeting launched a series of recruiting events, hence those present were only the kernel of the party. It is indicative of the character and weight of the Conservative Party that from among the top dignitaries of the country, the chief justice, the chief treasurer, the senior officials of the government organs, and the lord-lieutenants of the counties (*főispán* and deputy *főispán*), nearly all were present, and thereafter launched an active campaign to win a majority for the conservatives at the diet—not without success either.¹⁶

The post-1845 offensive of the camp led by Apponyi to repress the oppositionists in the counties was not at all ineffective, and the new conservative onslaught could rely on the situation thus created. As a result, there was a leap in the number of conservative deputies in the lower house session of November 1847, despite the retained oppositionist majority, and several prestigious oppositionist deputies were replaced by conservatives.¹⁷ In the person of the new deputy of Pest county, the opposition received a new leader.¹⁸ In the upper house, however, the conservative majority staunchly remained in place, despite the reinforced activity of the upper house opposition led by Lajos Batthyány.

The Opposition Program

Following Kossuth's draft, the program of the liberal reformers was finalized by Ferenc Deák and approved by the national conference on June 7, 1847. It was entitled *Opposition Manifesto*, but due to censorship, the text appeared abroad as the political manual *Controller*, edited by József Bajza.¹⁹ For a better understanding of the text, of great use will be Kossuth's draft, as well as the instructions (mostly formulated by Kossuth) to the deputies of Pest county.

¹⁶ Andics (1952–1981), 3:206–207, cf. Széchenyi (1925–1939), 6:470.

¹⁷ *KRN* (1847/48), i–vi, viii–x.

¹⁸ Kossuth (1948–1989), 11:10–80, 141–152, 168–196, 216–222.

¹⁹ *Ellenőr* (1847), 577–587; Kossuth (1948–1989), 11:141–152, 152–157, 168–196, Szabad (1977), 97–104, and Varga (1982b), 1208–1209.

After a definition of the commitments of the constitutional opposition, in *Opposition Manifesto* there is a brief review of the grievances of the constitutional status in Hungary and a list of its remedies, constitutional guarantees, and effective reforms. In addition, it covers the standpoint on the relationship with the Hereditary Lands and an opinion of the Conservative Party's move to create a pro-government majority in the diet. The following paragraphs are a summary of the contents of the program:

For the benefit of the country, the task of the Hungarian constitutional opposition—and indeed of all constitutional oppositions—is to control within the frames of the constitution the government, what it neglects, and all its politics. The opposition is to oppose or support subjects and facts, and not persons. Therefore it is to disapprove and obstruct the steps of the government that are unlawful or detrimental to the maintenance and development of constitutionality and the common interests of the country. The other reason why the opposition has to impose control is because the government is not at all a clearly parliamentary government, and it is under the influence of a power that is not national but foreign and absolutist. The current government is no exception, as it failed to redress the former grievances of the constitutional state and even caused new ones to appear.

The government has failed to give effect to sanctioned laws that would ensure the territorial integrity of the country and those, which referred to the Hungarian nationality. It violated Hungary's territorial integrity as it failed to implement Act 1836:21 on the reincorporation of the Partium and to put the Military Frontier Zone, along the southern borders of the country subordinated to the Imperial War Council, under the jurisdiction of Hungarian laws. *Codex cambio-mercantil*is was not put into effect in the Frontier Zone, nor were the new religious laws implemented. It was an offence to the Hungarian nationality that Act 1840:6 concerning the promotion of the knowledge of the Hungarian language was not implemented in the Military Frontier Zone. Furthermore, there was harassment by the military authorities of travelers with Hungarian passports. Another grievance was that of Act 1844:2, stipulating that the language of public education be Hungarian, which was ignored to such an extent that the government even decreed the closing of the literary circles in secondary schools. In addition to the grievances of territorial integrity and nationality, there were complaints about the government's changes in the constitutional institutions: the government changed the *Sabor* (Croatian parliament) by order, appointed administrators in several counties, and lifted the *főispán* to a rank above the counties. These measures were in contradiction with

the stipulations of the constitutional state, therefore they were unconstitutional.

To remedy the constitutional grievances, the increase and strengthening of constitutional guarantees is needed, as well as the introduction of expedient reforms. The safeguards of constitutionality are the responsibility of the government, the freedom of association, free press, abolition of censorship, unification of Transylvania and Hungary, and the union of the interests of the citizens of Hungary “with cautious forbearance toward the nationalities of other tongues,” as well as the freedom of religion by complementing the religious laws already passed by the parliament.

No one may appropriate the initiation of useful reforms, as it is the right of all Hungarian citizens; neither the opposition, nor the government, nor its party may lay exclusive claim to introducing innovations. The government—like any power—is intent on increasing its influence, and cannot be expected to develop constitutional guarantees or allow the nation control over it, since it is under foreign and absolutist influence.

The opposition plainly declares its propositions: general taxation in order to ease the burdens of the poor taxpaying strata by including those thus far privileged, with the reservation that the diet should determine and control how the revenues are spent; legislative and municipal rights for non-nobles (primarily for the royal towns and free districts); equality before the law; abolition of feudal bonds against compensation, with the involvement of the state; and ensuring the acquisition of credit and landed property by abolition of *aviticitas*. The opposition is in support of any step pointing in this direction and is going to promote the above reforms for the interest of the mental and material development of the country. The Hungarian constitutional opposition—Hungary’s reformist party—claims that one of the most effective motors of the nation’s development is public education in so much as it can stimulate the inhabitants to become industrious citizens on the basis of which they can win their personal independence.

In regard to the Austrian Hereditary Lands, the Hungarian constitutional opposition is aware of the status quo as put down in the *Pragmatica Sanctio*, but it also insists on Act 1790:10 which spells out that “Hungary is a free country and independent in its entire legislation, hence it is not subordinated to another country or nation.” The opposition is ready to harmonize the interests with those of the Hereditary Lands, but it refuses to sacrifice the constitutionality of the country to the absolutistic government of the empire. Moreover, the Hereditary Lands, which earlier having their constitutions but governed in an absolutistic manner for a long time

afterward, need constitutionality because that will ensure the basis for the unification of interests among the different parts of the empire and the mental and material growth and perseverance of the monarchy.

The aim of the opposition is the union of ideas, which it wishes to serve by declaring its goals and views, and with meetings in the future to determine the means (adjusted to the circumstances) for their attainment. The opposition also pronounces that it will preserve and ensure the freedom and lawful independence of the municipalities. The opposition considers dangerous the formation of the government into a party. Through such means the government wishes to create a blindly obedient majority in the legislation prior the publication of its views, interpreting the role of the majority in contradiction to the constitution, only acknowledging it when it is on its side.²⁰

It is clear from the summary of *Opposition Manifesto* that its argumentation was designed to support and strengthen the constitutionality of the Kingdom of Hungary, to eliminate constitutional grievances through the increase of guarantees and the introduction of effective reforms. Prior to the rise of the liberal opposition, the gravaminalist defense of the constitution of *regnum* and *natio* meant conservation of the institution of the Hungarian constitutional monarchy and the privileges of the estates. The views of *Opposition Manifesto* meant something quite different, tantamount to the radical transformation of the medieval constitution. Redressing the constitutional grievances affected the foundations of social organization and the state (feudal dependence and absolutistic government) since the proposed remedy was the creation of the guarantees of modern liberal parliamentarianism and the extension of the political rights of the privileged to the non-privileged. The passage on grievances and suggestions for their remedy were hardly supported by natural law arguments, unlike the declarations of the French and American revolutions whose wording laid claim to universal validity. At a closer glance, both the antidotes of the constitutional grievances (defense) and the proposed guarantees of the constitution (transformation) display the same tension; the muted, concealed, implicit, but decisive inner tensions between its gravaminalist form and its reformist content.

There were two kinds of suggested guarantees for the constitution: On the one hand, there was the restoration of old liberties and situations (sharing in and making public opinion, freedom of association, abolition of censorship, freedom of the press, and the union of Hungary and Transyl-

²⁰ Kossuth (1948–1989), 11:152–157. Cf. Kossuth (1847a).

vania). With the exception of the union, *Opposition Manifesto* projected these onto the past as erstwhile parts of the constitution. On the other hand, there were some new proposals added in a supplement (representative government, unification of interests, and freedom of religion enacted in a religious law), as if they were mere trivialities, but eventually they (at least the first two, making public opinion and association) entailed the radical transformation of the constitution. The representative government was incongruent with an absolutistic regime, and the unification of interests was an attack at the foundation of the feudal relations. The contents of the unification of interests were logically the effective reforms: general taxation and parliamentary allocation and control of the use of revenues, legislative and municipal representation of non-nobles, equality before the law, and the abolition of feudal bonds by force of the law and erasing *aviticitas*.²¹

The classes of citizens now rent apart shall be united on the basis of nationality and constitutionality: ... (1) as long as the penalization of nobles and non-nobles outrageously differs; (2) as long as the common people pay tax and the nobility does not share the burden; (3) as long as the common people have no political rights, being excluded from the constitution; and (4) as long as the greatest part of the common people, the peasants, are begrudging the nobility—certainly there will be and there can be no unification of interests, nor a strong nation or country.²²

This was laid down in *Instruction to the deputies of Pest county* as the definition of the innovations serving the unification of interests (also named in *Opposition Manifesto*). First it outlined the introduction of a criminal code as the token of equality before the law.²³ The authors of the program did not insist on the bill at any cost but tried to fortify personal liberty, the rights of the individual, and the modern penal system built on the equality of the citizens with new guarantees.

At the time in question, the domestic taxes covering the costs of county administration and the quartering of the army (practically a war tax), as well as statute labor and its redemption, were all imposed on the unprivileged. The privileged were exempt from these burdens in lieu of other burdens and obligations. Since the burdens and obligations of the privi-

²¹ Kossuth (1948–1989), 11:154–156.

²² Kossuth (1948–1989), 11:174.

²³ Kossuth (1948–1989), 11:175–176. Cf. Varga (1980a), 7–13, 21–41, 55–161; *Ogy.-i irományok* (1843/44), 1:26–276, 2:53–56, 58–62, 73–80, 153–157, 415–417, 3:22–34, 68–74, 106–139, 344–349, 4:26–28, 83–84, 107, 185–186, 265–305; Ferenc Kovács (1894), 4:20, 22, 24–27, 34, 36, 38.

leged in the service of the defense of the country eroded over the time, the proposition to have general and proportionate taxation was not unjustified. The precondition was that all taxes (domestic tax, war tax) should be paid in cash, the levied tax should be proportionate with wealth, the amount should be defined by the parliament, and legislation should control its collection and use:

In regard to both the domestic tax and the war tax, it must be the guiding principle that the same conditions should be observed when levying a tax on the nobility as are valid for the taxing of the common people ... If the nobility takes its share of the tax burdens, it is only obvious that the noblemen's burdens imposed on them so far should be cancelled.²⁴

In *Instruction*, the topic of general taxation was again connected to legislative guarantees and to the itemized enumeration of the direct and indirect resources of a planned national savings bank.

As for the parliamentary votes of the royal towns, the subject was put on the agenda of the 1843 diet by the monarch, but the bill foundered on the disagreement between the two houses concerning the conditions of the extension of the rights and the government supervision of the towns. *Instruction* adopted the position of the lower house, as the conservatives reiterated that of the upper house.²⁵

The redemption of feudal obligations enacted in 1840 allowed for the landlord and the peasant to conclude a private contract for the liberation of the peasant, but over the seven years that passed this trend failed to assume mass proportions. *Opposition Manifesto* called for complete and compulsory redemption with state intervention, and *Instruction* elaborated in detail that the starting point was the guarantee of compensation, ensured when redemption ceased to be an act of civil law and became one of political law. The document states that emerging from the feudal bondage along the course of the civil law would be so protracted that the full compensation of the nobility would become uncertain. Before compulsory redemption would be enacted, it would have to be determined that the object of redemption was not the value of the tenement held in socage but that of all the "accessories" on the land tenure (the peasant's duties to the

²⁴ Kossuth (1948–1989), 11:176–178, (1847b), *Ogy-i irományok* (1843/44), 3:266–344, 4:183–185, 209–210, 214–215, 243, 247–248, 309–310, 312–330, 334–335, 341, 347–349, 5:4–5, 62, 15–76, 91, 93–94, 96), *FN* (1843/44), 7:117–119, 125–126, 317) and Ferenc Kovács (1894), 4:339–340, 353–357, 412–416, 6:323–325, 374.

²⁵ Kossuth (1948–1989), 11:178–179.

landowner in return for the use of land, expressed in money terms). The estimation of the value of the peasant's obligation would not be equal to the burden imposed on the peasant but rather the extent of the landowner's gain by it.²⁶ The document urged for the single compulsory, comprehensive, and nationwide redemption with the participation of the state. *Instruction* pronounced on the abolition of *aviticitas* and entailed property in order to make lands free and safe, and it instructed the deputies of Pest county to speak up on the issues of popular education, customs, transportation vehicles, credit institutions, earlier and new grievances, and other questions.²⁷

The program of the Hungarian liberal reformers, gradually condensing into a party, was prepared and submitted to the national conference by a six-member committee.²⁸ What ideological specificities concerning the opposition can be gleaned from *Opposition Manifesto*?

In the *Manifesto*, the opposition portrayed itself in the role of the primary defender of the constitution, and its reformist activity was also presented in this context as well. The innovations were laid down as safeguards of the *ancient* constitution, albeit the contents of the guarantees, some being projected into the past and others made to look trivial, were in contradiction not only with absolutism but also with the system of privileges, that is, the constitution as the aggregate of laws and customs. The *Manifesto* radically reinterpreted the aristocratic constitution, its protecting role, but it did so covertly. Though the *Manifesto* seemingly adopted the position of safeguarding privileges through the listing of grievances, this continuity served to keep together and mobilize a widely heterogeneous camp. This method of presentation (tabling new ideas as if they were old, projecting some proposed innovations into the past) was used highly effectively by Wesselényi in the 1830s.²⁹

It was at the end of the eighteenth century that the pioneer of the unification of the interests, József Hajnóczy, declared that the best method of protecting the Hungarian constitution was to extend rights to the unprivileged as the constitutional rights rested on the supporting base of those who shared these rights. It was not for tactical considerations that

²⁶ Cf. Viszota (1927, 1930), 2:989–1010, Varga (1967), 37–38, 109–141; (1971), 7–15, Orosz (1977), Szabad (1977), 96–99, 106–107, Varga (1982b), 1199–1201, 1211, Kossuth (1948–1989), 11:179–180.

²⁷ Kossuth (1948–1989), 11:180–194, Szabad (1977), 107–108.

²⁸ *Ellenőr* (1847), 577–587, Kossuth (1948–1989), 11:141 152, 152–157.

²⁹ Cf. Trócsányi (1965), 83–291.

Kölcsey, Wesselényi, Deák, and Kossuth stressed that the multiplication of freedom reinforced it, but because they all supposed that strengthening the constitution by the extension of the rights was the most effective defense of constitutionalism against absolutism.³⁰ What they did for tactical reasons was conceal the radical transformation of the constitution. A good way of playing down the magnitude of the program was this kind of reinterpretation. At the same time, the representatives of the unification of interests also needed to believe that the innovations were adjusted to the mechanism of aristocratic constitutionality, or were not incompatible with it. The feudal legal system, the world of liberties, constituted the foundation of the modern legal system because the unprivileged would be lifted within the “bulwark” of the constitution, the contents of which would thus be extended to ensure the equality of all, not only the privileged.

Owing to its intention to protect the constitution, the program of the Hungarian constitutional opposition was more closely related to the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Dutch and English documents (concerning the extension of political rights which reworded the privileges as liberties) than to the late eighteenth-century American and French declarations (written with a more universal intention and on the basis of natural law).³¹ The cause for the frequently concealed suggestions of gradual emancipation concerning the guarantees of parliamentarianism must be found in the decisive weight of absolutism and the broadening of the body politic (visible in the heterogeneous composition of the opposition), as well as the foreseeable resistance of the privileged. Assimilation through the extension of rights was included in both *Opposition Manifesto* and *Instruction*.³²

³⁰ Csizmadia (1958), 27–46, 47–96, 153–185, 285–303, Széchenyi (1833), 1–46, 292–296, Kölcsey (1960), 2:27–39, 102–111, 152–166, 341–629, Wesselényi (1833), 48–81, 99–114, 152–282, 296–302, (1843), 5–97, 184–372, Ferenc Deák (1903), 1:488–553, 2:54–175, Kossuth (1948–1989), 11:141–152, 168–196, *Ellenőr* (1847), 224–290, Kossuth (1847). During the lower house debate of the second franchise reform bill in the British parliament in 1867, Benjamin Disraeli also argued that he did not want the existing constitutional institutions to be eradicated but to be reinforced by extending the political rights: *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, vol. CLXXXVI (London, 1867), 6–94, esp. 7.

³¹ Bibó (1986–1990), 3:5–123 and Arendt (1979), 25–74, 183–281.

³² Trócsányi (1965), Barta (1966), Szabad (1971, 1977), Varga (1982a,b, 1983), Gergely (1987, 2005), Miklós Szabó (1989, 2001), Kecskeméti (2008), Dénes (2006, 2008a).

The Differences

One can conclude the following when comparing the conservative program and György Apponyi's memorandum, with the opposition's program seen in *Opposition Manifesto* and *Instruction to the Pest County deputies*.

Both programs included the issue of money payment for the billeting of troops, work on the criminal code, settling the customs relations, founding a national savings bank, redeeming the feudal bonds, modifying the *aviticitas*, regulating the parliamentary vote of towns and changing their municipal structure, and the sharing of the tax burdens by all. The amending of the religious law and the annexation of the Partium were wholly identical points on both agendas. Apponyi's memorandum and the opposition's platform also contain several items in common: the mining law, redemption for billeting, the establishment of credit banks, and the improvement of communication. Seemingly, the subjects of reform for both sides are identical. In actual fact, however, a closer look discerns differences, even concerning the implementation of the redemption of billeting, a hard-fought compromise (the moot point being the number of regiments to be paid for).

The work on the criminal code was vague in the conservative program. In Apponyi's presentation it was a task to restore the authority of the supreme power by guaranteeing the security of the state and respect for the executive power. In the opposition's program its interpretation was different: the criminal code was the guarantee of equality before the law through the introduction of public, oral, and uniform jurisprudence, and trial by jury.

The redemption for the billeting of troops was already supported by Aurél Dessewffy with reference to the *Operata* of the committees of the 1790/91 diet; the mining code was approved by both houses of the diet of 1843/44 (Zsedényi, the deputy of a mining region, made a special point of it). Zsedényi attacked the liberal version of the criminal code at that diet with reference to the immaturity of the people ("first having a middle class, then a jury"). Credit institutions and communication were touched on in Aurél Dessewffy's memorandum and his brother also discussed them, though compared to the concrete proposals of the liberal reformers (a planned Vukovár–Fiume railway line), they confined their focus on paved roads and generalities.³³

³³ Aurél Dessewffy (1887), 201–212; *Ogy.-i irományok* (1843/44), 2:265–328, 429–436, 536–544, 3:58–61, 153, 155, 164, 168–226, 5:21; Ferenc Kovács (1894), 4:20, 22, 24–27, 34, 36, 38; Emil Dessewffy (1844), (1847a), 17, 71, 82, 83–84; 1847b, 122–124; Gergely (1982), 61–86.

In 1839, Aurél Dessewffy supported the optional redemption of the peasants' feudal obligations—provided that *aviticitas* remained unharmed—and urged for the regulation of the public work of the peasants for the county. At the 1843/44 diet, Zsedényi substituted the demand for an effective public administration for social reform. In the second half of the 1840s, Emil Dessewffy tried to play down the liberal proposals of complete redemption of servitudes and general taxation by urging the modernization of the economy (actually, the economy of the landowning nobility).³⁴

According to their program, the conservatives wished to clear away the obstacles from the path of the optional redemption of feudal bonds, to modify *aviticitas*, and to inspire sympathy for the idea of general taxation (which in fact meant the evasion of the actual question of the nobility's share of the tax burdens—its rejection). Concerning manumission compensation, general taxation, and *aviticitas*, the conservatives kept aloof of reforms, representing the protection of untouchable feudal property. The chancellor wrote about easing the process of redeeming the feudal obligations, the pruning of the detrimental outgrowths of *aviticitas*, and tried to assess the attitude of his peers to the taxation of the nobility. By contrast, the liberals included in their program the compulsory and complete redemption of the feudal obligations with state mediation, and supported it with concrete suggestions. They wished to eradicate *aviticitas* together with the entailed land and put on their banner the introduction of general taxation based on practical and thoughtful arguments, linking it up with the parliamentary allocation and control of revenues.

Aurél Dessewffy had already recommended that the government should curb the jurisdiction of county self-government, increase the weight of towns in the diet, and bring order to the legislative procedure. A separate taxation of the nobility and the exclusion of propertyless nobles from county politics were raised by Albert Sztáray. Zsedényi's contributions to the diet centered on law and order, and effective public administration, which were recurrent topics of conservative journalism. From 1845 the conservative offensive also attributed more than theoretical importance to these topics. Aurél Dessewffy opined that Hungary was part of the empire, and instead of ensuring the independence of the country, the imperial decisions had to be influenced. Zsedényi branded the politics of the opposition emotional politicizing and confronted it with the need for

³⁴ Aurél Dessewffy (1887), 3–12, 209, Ferenc Kovács (1894), 3:460, 480, 482, Emil Dessewffy (1847b), 18–19, 241–224.

order, with the conservatives' realistic politics. Ferenc Kállay tied the "feudal anti-capitalist" critique with an apology of aristocratic organization of state and society. Sándor Lipthay and Antal Szécsen catalogued the guarantees of conserving the system of privileges. Emil Dessewffy tried to persuade his readers of the advantages of economic integration in the empire, urging for the imperial customs union and an excise on tobacco. He named the government as the ally of the Magyars when he identified them with the nobility and contrasted both with the nationalities. All of them were in search of new ways and means to preserve and modernize the system of privileges.³⁵

Regarding the question of the dietal votes of towns and districts, as well as their municipal structure, the conservative program and political journalism laid stress on the proprietary and intellectual guarantees and the government's supervision over the town. This issue was coupled with the need for free speech in political deliberation through a regulated order of procedure (which, as we saw, meant the repression of the influence of public opinion). By increasing the parliamentary weight of the towns and chapters, which should add to the pro-government majority, Apponyi thought to impose order on the counties and hold the diet in hand. While the conservative program left the issue of the customs unclear, Apponyi—similarly to Emil Dessewffy's economic political reasoning—made concrete proposals calling for the elimination of the tariff between Hungary and the empire (and the introduction of the tobacco monopoly). The liberals, on the other hand, envisioned the effective public administration differently from the conservatives and the government. The liberal reformers's program set a social and state organization built upwards from the lowermost layers against the absolutist ideas of order imposed from above.

The conservatives were agrarians in support of the established division of labor within the empire; they were preparing to export the produce of their modernized large estates to the empire. The liberal opposition aimed to develop a modern national economy, industry, and trade to eliminate

³⁵ Aurél Dessewffy (1887), 13–110, 201–208, 210–211, 296–349; Albert Sztáray, "Nagymihályi levelek [Letters from Nagymihály]," pts. 1–3, *V*, Jan. 8, 15, and 19, 1842; idem, "Státusgazdasági elmélkedések. [Thoughts on state economy]," *V*, Apr. 2, 1842. Idem, "Háziadó [Domestic tax]" pts. 1 and 2, *V*, Apr. 13 and 16, 1842; *Ogy.-i irományok* (1843/44) 5:87–88; Ferenc Kovács (1894) 4:743–745, 6:113–114, 118–196, 236–237, 379; [Emil Dessewffy], "Legyünk őszinték [Let's be honest]," pt. 2, *BH*, May 8, 1846; idem, "Nyílt levelek Erős Lajoshoz, Szabolcsba [Open letter to Lajos Erős in Szabolcs]," pt. 4, *BH*, Feb. 19, 1847; Emil Dessewffy (1847a), 32, 34, 35, 39–40, 42.

the subordinated position of the Hungarian economy, and to assert self-determination in economic matters as well. The opposition discarded the idea of a customs union within the empire but wished to enter into a customs union with the Hereditary Lands: they asked for free trade with foreign countries, and the establishment of partnership on equal grounds between the more advanced imperial economy and the underdeveloped Hungarian national economy.

The conservative program emphasized the relationship and unity with the empire, while the liberal program defined the *Pragmatica Sanctio* and Act 1790:10 together as the mainstay of the political relationship of Austria and Hungary. The liberals wished to ensure the constitutional independence of Hungary, but also wanted the Hereditary Lands to have their constitutions—these suggestions pointing towards a federation or partnership of constitutionally governed states united by a common dynasty.

The programs differed not only in tone but also in their essentials. The main objectives of the conservatives were the repression of the opposition, the creation of law and order (bringing the political institutions closer to the political structure of the empire built downward from the top), and first of all the economic integration in the empire. The future envisaged by the liberals included on the one hand external guarantees of the federation of states and the customs union, and on the other the internal guarantees of a modern liberal state organized on self-determination and the transformation of privileges into liberties.

*Conservative Politics in Defense (1847–1848)***The Immediate Precedent**

On November 12, 1847, Ferdinand V opened the diet in Pozsony speaking in Hungarian, a rather unusual act for any Habsburg monarch of the previous three centuries. The two houses of the parliament elected Archduke Stephen, son of the late palatine Joseph, to fill the office vacated by his father.¹

The factual part of the sovereign's address, signed by Ede Zsedényi, began with the election of the palatine, followed by issues pending since the previous diet and the cardinal items of the conservative proposals (creation of the customs union, evasion of the redemption of feudal servitudes, and pacification of tensions caused by the failure to reintegrate the Partium). Although György Apponyi's propositions to enforce order were omitted, the royal speech ended with the sovereign's express wish to keep the order of procedure in the lower house.

On the agenda was the following: the redemption of the maintenance of army troops; the regulation of the parliamentary vote of free royal towns, mining towns, religious orders, and free districts; the regulation of the municipal structure of towns; the establishment of a public fund to cover public expenses; and submission of the criminal code for sanction. It was inherent in the propositions that the legislature should cautiously modify the laws on the acquisition and transfer of landed property and it should take steps to repay the central loan it had received for the public expenses of the country during the previous diet. In addition to these issues left "unsettled" by the 1843/44 diet, the monarch's address touched on the redemption of the peasants' obligations, the customs issue, and the grievance that Act 1836:21 had not been put into effect. The speech included items based on an interpretation of György Apponyi's memorandum of January 1847, as they ordered the diet to deliberate the obstacles in the way of the redemption of the peasants' duties, the abolition of the customs line between Hungary and the Hereditary Lands, and the difficulties holding back the reincorporation of the Partium.² One by one, and on the whole, the propositions in the speech suggested legal continuity, the

¹ *Ogy-i irományok* (1847/48), 1–4, *KRN* (1847/48), 6–10. Cf. Ballagi (1897), 689–693, Ambrus Miskolczy (1980), and Vörös (1980c), bk. 2:1204–1210.

² *Ogy-i irományok* (1847/48), 4–6.

invulnerability of constitutionality, and the government's commitment to reforms, although in fact they failed to remedy the grievances of constitutionality, did not contain institutional guarantees of constitutionality, and did not touch on the fundamental reforms.

Since the conservatives had failed to win a majority in the lower house, it was not unfounded to expect the opposition to voice new grievances and suggestions for constitutional guarantees, as well as try to introduce basic reform bills.

That was exactly what the government wished to neutralize—at least in part. Ferdinand V's speech in Hungarian, the appointment of the palatine, and the moderate tone of the propositions were concessions devised to mitigate the sentiments against the government. However, putting the customs union on the agenda together with the conservative reinterpretation of the redemption of feudal servitudes and the implementation of the law about the reintegration of the Partium left no doubt that the government wished to impose its earlier position, though with tactical concessions and in gradual steps.

The lower house immediately drafted bills for the billeting of troops, municipal structure and parliamentary representation of free royal towns, transfer of proprietary right, mortgage trials of noblemen, registration of noble landed estates, permanent courts of counties, the amendment to Act 1836:21, and for the press coverage of the diet, and then submitted them for deliberation to the upper house. In reply to the monarch's propositions, the majority of the lower house voted 26 to 22 for Kossuth's position against Széchenyi's memorandum which was close to the government party's standpoint. The general assembly put it through as a resolution of the lower house on December 1, and then sent to the upper house.³ The upper house turned it back for amendment after a six-day dispute, but this decision was not univocal. Out of the 152 votes, 95 were for the modification and 57 were for the acceptance of the address, which meant that the opposition in the upper house had gained strength.⁴ The lower house lined up behind Kossuth and at the district meeting of December 17, and the general assembly on December 21, decided to shelve the address to the throne. They did not accept the modifications of the upper house, and since the original reply could not be submitted to the monarch owing to

³ *Ogy-i irományok* (1847/48), 6–41. The Lower House had district sessions of preliminary discussions before the official decision making national session.

⁴ *Ogy-i irományok* (1847/48), 43–44, *KRN* (1847/48), 24–43, and Kossuth (1948–1989), 11: 311–334, 341–343, 345–348.

the upper house resolution, they removed it from the agenda as a whole, but began to deliberate its points one by one.⁵

In the lower house's reply, the deputies expressed their gratitude to the monarch for his opening words, the filling of the palatine's office, and the royal propositions. They emphasized that these moves had also confirmed that the interests of the dynasty and the nation were in common. They pointed out the main obstacle in the way of constitutional reform: the failure to put Act 1790:10 into effect. In their view, Hungary's government was not autonomous, the foundations of the legislation and the government were different, and therefore it was not certain if the questions that were raised about the unification of the goals of the nation and the government could be settled. Earlier grievances had not received redress and new ones had arisen; the announcement and implementation of the laws had not been ensured. The government had failed to announce the religious and exchange acts in the Military Frontier Zone, and at the same time one-sidedly extended its authority ignoring the constitutional influence of the legislation. Proof of this was the government's move to extend the earlier occasional appointment of administrators into a general practice, and so was the regulation of the Croatian parliament over the head of the Hungarian diet. The houses were submitting their opinion to His Majesty, as it was their duty to their sovereign to expose the hindrances to the goals desired by the king and nation. With a view to the common interests of the dynasty, the Empire and Hungary, the houses were looking on His Majesty to remove the obstacles in the way of organic transformation and they wished to submit their views in more detail at a later date. They deemed it necessary to harmonize the interests of the Hereditary Lands and the protection of Hungary's independence and legal rights: the extensive development of the Hungarian Kingdom's constitutionality and material strength would have to be coordinated with the intellectual and material interests of the empire on the basis of lawfulness and the requirements of the age. The deputies of the lower house were elaborating the royal propositions and other questions raised by the country's needs and grievances, but the number, importance, and complexity of the issues to be solved made it imperative that annual diets be held in Pest thereafter. They asked their king to reassure the nation in advance by deciding that the annual diet in Pest was necessary.⁶

⁵ *FN* (1847/48), 7–132, *KRN* (1847/48), vols. 1–4.

⁶ Kossuth (1948–1989), 11:380–381, 391–406, 408–409, 412–413, 422–425, 428–429.

In the opinion of contemporary and later conservatives, the royal propositions in the king's address represented the *neo-conservative* government's openness to reforms and offered grounds for their achievement on the basis of mutual concessions by the pro-government party and the opposition party. The lower house reply to the throne—they claimed—did not forward the cause for reform but launched a confrontation when it ought to have exercised self-restraint and striven for compromise. In their opinion, the propositions revealed the government's earnestness and flexibility, while the opposition's reply was defiant and irresponsible.⁷ When, however, one puts the royal propositions and the lower house's reply under scrutiny, one cannot help arriving at a different conclusion. Despite the reserved tone adjusted to the changed situation, the king's propositions were in line with the circulars reporting on the conservative party conferences and with Apponyi's memorandum, while the lower house reply project harmonized with *Opposition Manifesto* and *Instruction to the Pest county deputies*.

More conspicuously than the latter two documents, the opposition's reply displayed the ambition to keep together their heterogeneous group, but the drafters had to take into account the strengthening of the conservatives in the lower house as well as the conservative majority of the upper house. That was why the reply to the throne did not list the essential reform ideas and did not take the government to task openly. By acting upon the fundamental principle of constitutional monarchy—separating the person and function of the head of state from the government—the reply draft had the possibility to express loyalty to the sovereign and criticize His Majesty's government. The authors of the address to the throne stressed the concord between the king's and the nation's reform intentions and interpreted the circumstances of the opening and the royal propositions as proof of the sovereign's inclination to reform, and this inclination entitled the deputies to inform their sovereign of the obstacles on the road to reform. These obstacles were the unconstitutional behavior of the government, they pointed out, and the theoretically constitutional Hungarian political life could not be equated with the political conditions and absolutistic governance of the Hereditary Lands and that the interests of the monarchy and Hungary would have to be reconciled. The need for a federation of states and customs union was formulated in a more abstract manner than in the *Instruction*, but the conceptual identity was clear. The

⁷ *Ogy-i irományok* (1847/48), 4–6 and Szekfü (1933), 216–222. Cf. István Deák (1979), 54–56.

reply positioned the Hungarian parliament as the legal forum to work out reforms, as the constitutional partner of the monarch and repository of Hungarian constitutionality against the centralizing and unconstitutional (or least constitution breaching) absolutist government, His Majesty's Hungarian government. Since the removal of the obstacles holding back the constitutional reform was the indispensable precondition for implementing innovations, and the elaboration and enactment of reforms was urgent, it was necessary to increase the weight of the legislation and ensure annual dietal sessions in Pest, the heart of the country.

The demand for government responsibility, the call for the political and economic federation between Hungary and the Hereditary Lands, and the increase of the weight and influence of the legislature in the Kingdom of Hungary were the conceptual elements of the reply enveloped in the externalities of a submission to the monarch. The external features of the illusion of the sovereign's power—the tenet of harmony between the reform intentions of the dynasty and the nation—were accentuated. The coordination of the interests of the Hereditary Lands and Hungary, as the demand for the constitutionality of Cisleithanian politics, was formulated rather abstractly as a task devolved upon the monarch.

The reply of the lower house was a version of the constitution protecting (and reinterpreting) conception modified for tactical reasons and adapted to the situation. The drafters of the royal propositions, on the other side, applied their conservative conception and strategy. At the opening of the diet on November 12, 1847, the diet was presented a tactically measured portion of the conservative conception, while in early December the liberal opposition's conception was introduced.

An examination of the conservative arguments adduced during the upper house debate over the reply draft—more cogent than the arguments of the lower house conservatives—outlines how the conservative conception and strategy were applied.

Conservative Positions and Arguments

A six-day dispute on the lower house project of an address to the throne was quite unusual. It was unusual because the liberal magnates persuaded a majority for the first two days of the debate to support the lower house position—clearly a result of their convincing arguments, the morality of their position, and their intellectual superiority to the conservatives (of whom Count Dániel Vay was outstanding on account of his intellect and

acumen). From the third day, the number of conservative contributions to the dispute increased and in the remaining four days the conservatives won the majority. The conservative request for amendment was supported by all deputy *főispán*, the great majority of the *főispán*, all the bannerets but one, and all the bishops without exception. Four *főispán* and the Master of the King's Horses supported the lower house version. The magnates without high dignities or offices were massively divided, since a part of them constituted the opposition in the upper house. Three conservative aristocrats suggested that the government was going to reassure the diet soon of its intention, which turned out to be the anticipation of the royal rescript of January 30, 1848. Even so, the conservatives won a surprisingly modest victory with a margin of 38 votes.⁸

The decision of the conservatives on the address to the throne was enunciated by the palatine, as chairman of the session, and it was passed as the upper house resolution. It was stated that the appropriate response would be to send a note of gratitude to the sovereign; if the lower house wanted to elaborate on the grievances, they would have to do it in a separate submission after thorough deliberation. If, however, the lower house insisted on its own version of the reply (as they would almost certainly do), it would have to be amended at several points. First and foremost, all statements concerning the system of administrators and the changes of the Croatian *Sabor* would have to be omitted, since these judgements forestalled all meaningful negotiations about the new grievances. The reference to Act 1790:10 in the reply would also need modification, for the idea of the responsible government did not ensue from its text. Thorough discussion would have to precede a legislative resolution on the annual convocation of the diet in Pest, and until the final decision, the preliminary opinion ought to be omitted from the reply to the monarch.⁹

In the opinion of the conservative majority of the upper house, the reply should contain the so far unremedied grievances in addition to the expression of gratitude and thanks to the sovereign. As regards the new grievances, at first it would have to be proved that they were real grievances on the basis of thorough discussions. Most conservative upper house members expressed their position peremptorily, without arguments (in the knowledge of a safe majority) and only approached the contents of

⁸ *FN* (1847/48), 7–9, 58–59, 60–63, 85–91, Ballagi (1897), 693–707.

⁹ *FN* (1847/48), 7–132; “Főispánok és főispáni helytartók [Főispáns and deputy főispáns=administrators],” in *Schematismus* (1847), 89–98; “Zászlósúrak és főpapok [Bannerets and higher clergy],” in *KRN* (1847/48), vols. 1 and 2.

the project of the address to the throne formally. Some, however, tried to adduce sensible arguments in support of the conservative position, which was not an easy thing to do. It was not so easy to take slightly the contents of the lower house's proposed reply to the monarch. It was not easy because the draft proclaimed the standpoint of the lower house majority, therefore its fate would influence the entire dietal session. The draft conveying the position of the constitution protecting reformists, who combined loyalty to the sovereign with criticism of the government's goals and activities, was hard for the conservatives both to accept or to reject. Assenting to the reply would be tantamount to qualifying the government's activity as unconstitutional, while its conceptual refutation would have run into serious difficulties because Act 1790:10 was only partially realized; the government had indeed extended its scope of authority by evading the diet and it also transformed its attitude to the counties by introducing (actually regularizing) the system of administrators and reinterpreting the function of the *főispán* (to the detriment of county autonomy).

The conservatives who had something to say about the contents of the reply—however little it might be—questioned its lawfulness and purposefulness in the first place. Many thought it was alien to Hungarian legal practice and a simulation of foreign examples. Some claimed it did not really represent the true majority of the lower house; again others thought it was lawful but it was not a resolution but rather a warning, the precedent being the lower house's address to the throne at the previous diet.¹⁰

Though Emil Dessewffy evaluated the proposed address as a declaration of honest and patriotic intentions, an unusually profound writing well suited to a statesman, yet he thought it was mistaken, inexpedient, and, after all, unlawful. It was mistaken because it exercised pressure on the upper house. It was inexpedient because it did not promote cooperation between the two houses and between the diet and the government, which was needed for reforms. It was unlawful because it adopted a custom alien to the Hungarian legal system, whereas the different viewpoints of the two houses could not be placed on a single common footing.¹¹ Most conservative speakers (some rudely, some more politely) turned down the text resentfully as an act of impeachment and quite injudicious as regards the realization of reforms.

Nearly a dozen members of the upper house expressed their opinion in support of the opposition's statement that Act 1790:10, which ensured the

¹⁰ *FN* (1847/48), 7–9. Cf. Bártfai (1943), 2:576, 616.

¹¹ *FN* (1847/48), 39–41.

independence of the country, was not in effect and as a result the political life of the Kingdom of Hungary was subordinated to an absolutistic government. Count Emil Dessewffy, Baron Pál Sennyey, and Count Antal Szécsen expressed the related position of the conservatives. None stated that the act in question had been perfectly implemented, but all suggested implicitly that there was no possibility for its perfect implementation as the *Pragmatica Sanctio* (dependent on mutual accommodation and concessions) was the bond between Hungary and the Habsburg Empire. Antal Szécsen argued that it was precisely this bond that lent Hungary its weight and Magyar hegemony in the country. It ensured that it was the constitutional Hungarian nation alone in Central Europe to which the nationalities of the region had to adapt themselves when they wanted political rights.¹² Instead of mistrust, Pál Sennyey argued, confidence and support should be granted the government so that it could have greater influence in Vienna (having thus a greater say in decisions concerning the whole of the empire and the shaping of the imperial Hungarian policy, as Aurél Dessewffy had suggested in 1839 and his brother Emil repeated afterward).¹³

Making the network of administrators regular was not against the county system itself but rather against the party politics of the counties (to cite several conservatives, including Emil Dessewffy), and it served more effective public administration and order above parties instead of the parties' political goals.¹⁴ The opposition pitted the earlier authority of the *főispán* against that of the administrators, when in 1843/44 it was the opposition that had attacked the institution.¹⁵

In reaction, the conservatives thought the constitution of the past eight centuries was jeopardized by the copiers of foreign models and not by the government.¹⁶ The opposition pretended that Hungary was a parliamentary country of the western type, whereas it was not (instead of the prestige and working of a government, the opposition was attacking the government and authority in general) and thereby the opposition was irresponsibly undermining law and order.¹⁷

Emil Dessewffy argued that the conservatives' concentration in a party and the attempts to win a majority in the lower house had mobilized ear-

¹² FN (1847/48), 85–91.

¹³ FN (1847/48), 91–93.

¹⁴ FN (1847/48), 58–59.

¹⁵ FN (1847/48), 76–78, 85–89, 106–107.

¹⁶ FN (1847/48), 17–18, 51–54.

¹⁷ FN (1847/48), 65–67.

lier politically passive forces for positive support of the government's policies, and as it was proven by the Transylvanian diet, it was not a hopeless tendency.¹⁸ The *főispán* of Baranya, György Mailáth, and Pál Sennyey claimed that there was little time to evaluate the Hungarian government's acts and the public climate had changed unfavorably as the opposition aroused hostilities to the government, which aggravated the situation of the government and prevented the creation of effective order above parties.¹⁹

Several contributors to the debate declared that the condemnation of the government's intentions was malevolent or fueled by party bias, whereas the government, branded absolutistic, was truly working on the realization of reforms, as the king's propositions proved.²⁰ It was not correct to take the government to task for absolutistic governance of the Hereditary Lands, since it did not belong to the jurisdiction of the Hungarian legislation, just as the control of the Hungarian political life was not in the jurisdiction of the Cisleithanian government.²¹

Several upper house members announced their views that among the previous grievances the legislature itself was to blame for the fate of Act 1836:21. The act on the reincorporation of the Partium was rashly passed without due preparations—a sign of legislative irresponsibility—and that was why it could not be implemented. Settling the issue of the Croatian parliament was the king's prerogative and a domestic matter of Croatia, and this issue, similarly to the system of administrators, still needed thrashing out.²² Before the Hungarian diet should convene more frequently, it would have to be reorganized to make it more functional, an action long overdue. Its jurisdiction did not need to be extended because legislative power tended to incorporate all else.²³ In Emil Dessewffy's opinion, parliamentarianism itself depended on the maturity of the body politic and not on form. In France, the government of the country was parliamentary in its externalities, with parliamentary illusions rather than real parliamentarianism. In Spain, the parliamentary forms were not organic but copies of foreign models, and on all weighty issues the sovereign's word was decisive independently of the parliamentary form. In

¹⁸ *FN* (1847/48), 60–63.

¹⁹ *FN* (1847/48), 85–91.

²⁰ *FN* (1847/48), 58–59, 132.

²¹ *FN* (1847/48), 58–59, 65–67, 85–91.

²² *FN* (1847/48), 76–78, 85–91.

²³ *FN* (1847/48), 46–47, 67–69.

England there was indeed parliamentary government because there were many parliamentary representatives in it, yet the decisive force was not the parliamentary majority. Likewise, he claimed that in Hungary the horizon of those already involved in policy making should be extended instead of the enlargement of the legislation's jurisdiction, and instead of changing the institutions at any cost, the people ought to change first.²⁴

The arguments of the conservative upper house members did not convince the members of the upper house opposition. Count Lajos Batthyány made it a point to declare, "less ratiocination and more effort to win majority!" The oppositionist aristocrats had a different view on confidence toward the government from the conservatives.

We support the good government and the men whose ... words and deeds give ground to presume that their intentions are good; however, concerning the arguments that have been enumerated [first of all by Emil Dessewffy], namely that this government is extending the public sphere, emancipating the middle class, etc., I must admit that I find no merit with the government, for it has no merit in extending the body politic; it did not extend it or if it did, it did so one-sidedly so that I would rather blame than praise it for this act. Whether it has the emancipation of the middle class at heart can be seen by taking a look at an item in HM's propositions, which reveals that the aim is not the emancipation of the middle class but the extension of government power and its enrichment with a new factor.²⁵

Batthyány also reiterated the liberal thesis condemning the absolutistic government of the Cisleithanian parts and the need for Hungarian influence in imperial foreign politics.

Count László Teleki discussed the perspective offered by the conservatives (of the 1846–47 Transylvanian diet):

If we identify Count Emil Dessewffy's statements with the position of the party to which he belongs, what will become of us when this party wins victory in our country? Concerning constitutionality, the Transylvanian example shows that all constitutional guarantees will be lost, and regarding development, there will be righteousness in result of which even the so far sacrosanct rights of the people will be unjustly abolished instead of granting new rights to the people ... The God of the Magyars forbids that the conservative party shall ever manage to achieve in Hungary what they so fully achieved in Transylvania.²⁶

The system of administrators and the foundation of the Conservative Party were seen by the oppositionist members of the upper house as a means of

²⁴ *FN* (1847/48), 17–18, 85–91, cf. 91–92, 100–102, 116–117, 124–127.

²⁵ *FN* (1847/48), 85–91.

²⁶ *FN* (1847/48), 129–130, cf. 50–51.

absolutist politics and not the instruments of order above parties and effective public administration. They labeled them as tools aimed to win a majority in support of the government in the counties and the lower house. They claimed that the pro-government attempt to win a majority was not parliamentary, for the government remained in power without majority support, and neither the government nor the Conservative Party took the rules and morals of majority government seriously. By using the key positions in political life for political goals of the party—curbing county autonomy and trying to shift the functions and forums defined in the constitution toward an absolutistic direction—the government made innovations against the constitution, in extension and centralization of its own power, for which the diet should take it to task or at least protest. The government and the conservatives failed to give evidence either of their readiness for reforms or of respect for the constitution. It was also rather irresponsible for the conservative peers to evade a debate about the essence of the issues.²⁷

On the last day of the upper house debate, Count Dániel Vay summed up the conservative position contra the arguments of the liberal aristocrats and the conservative response to the liberal challenge of the lower house:

When the discussion of this issue began, we laid down two theses: ... first, that Act 1790:10 was not a reality; [second,] that the government was expanding one-sidedly.—Neither the first, nor the second statement has been refuted; they declared that they did not intend to refute it at all, speaking a lot about why ... Contrary to their promise, they canonize certain grievances as not being grievances; the logical consistency would have required that they should refute the theses and explain for each *gravamen* why it was not a grievance. They ought to have explained why the failure to reintegrate the Partium was not a grievance—and why it was not a demonstration of the glory of the government's power; they ought to have proven that the failure to implement the religious and exchange acts in the Military Frontier Zone was a merit of the government ... If you, gentlemen, have proven all this one by one, you indeed would have refuted our two assertions, namely that the government was extending its authority one-sidedly, and that Act 1790:10 was not reality.²⁸

²⁷ *FN* (1847/48), 124–126, see also 34–38, 80–84.

²⁸ “Vay Dániel gróf, Vay Lajos báró, Podmaniczky Frigyes báró, Ráday Gedeon gróf, Wenckheim Béla báró, Haller Sándor gróf, Teleki László gróf, Teleki Domokos gróf, Zay Károly gróf, Szapáry Antal gróf és Erdődy Sándor gróf felszólalásai [Contributions by...],” in *FN* (1847/48), 9–12, 15–17, 18–20, 29–38, 42–43, 63–71, 112–118, 124–128, esp. 112–116. Despite his qualities, liberal commitments, and parliamentary role, Dániel Vay disappeared suddenly from the Hungarian political life. As Gábor Pajkossy informed me, Count János Waldstein challenged Dániel Vay and Kossuth to a duel to eliminate two outstanding figures of the liberal reformers from the political life as an

The conservatives shunned meaningful debate over the lower house draft of the reply mostly on a plea of objections to form. This was the main accusation by the opposition in the upper house, and they declared that since neither the proposed reply to the throne, nor their statements had received sensible counter argument, the conservative demand for modification was won by physical force—the larger number of conservatives—and it was not an intellectual achievement.

Despite the truth of this judgement, it must be realized that there was a conceptual motive in the conservative position apart from (but not independently of) the fact of dependence on the government and the hierarchy of personal subordinations. Far from being appealing, this motive was model-like: as against the liberal position of protecting and reinterpreting the constitution and calling for institutional guarantees, the conservatives tried to create the illusion that with the tools of informal politics they could influence, even control the decision making center of the empire (although they were aware that only partial results could be achieved in this way, if any). That was why their keynote speakers stressed that confidence in the government was needed instead of popular pressure or criticism, and that was why they got into irresolvable contradiction when they simultaneously advocated “order above parties” and the conservative pro-government party. It was alien to the nature of informal politics to give an account to groups of the society organized from below, let alone representing their wish legally and openly. The essence of the conservative strategy—winning informal influence in the center of the empire—was incongruent with the actual pluralism of the Hungarian political scene despite its several anachronistic features. The party of the government did not tolerate political activity (at least in effective form) of a different outlook than that of the strengthening of the government and “order above parties.”

Now, the government had to face the situation that, despite all its efforts, the majority in the lower house was not supportive. There was considerable opposition in the upper house as well. Judged by the purely pragmatic conception of “political realism,” the government’s unconstitutional procedure could only have been justified by its achievements, which it failed to present, nor did it care to inform the Hungarian public; its eye was cast on the leaders of the empire.

agent provocateur. Kossuth would only comply if the duel was held after the rise of the parliament, for his time and blood was at the disposal of the district electing him to the diet. Vay, however, accepted it but upon his wife’s persuasion withdrew, which meant that he was regarded morally bankrupt even before 1848. Cf. Kászonyi (1970), 160–162.

The conservative conception—economic integration in the empire and the transformation of the political structure to bring it closer to the Cisleithanian absolutistic system—was consonant with Metternich's conception at several points. The difference between the two may only be presumed, for it was inherent in the motives and not so much in the conception. While Metternich's policy of integration in the empire within the given political frames was devised for the survival and inner equilibrium of the empire, the Hungarian conservative statesmen probably also wished to increase the weight of Hungary within the empire by qualifying their own short-term economic interests as the precondition for the general efflorescence of the Hungarian economy, to which end they urged for the economic integration in the empire and the creation of the conditions thereof. They obviously identified the increase in the weight of their nation with the increase in their influence. They did not only identify with Metternich's—presumed, anticipated, or known—conception, but by acquiring positions they were also preparing for the post-Metternich era. However, the conservatives could not profess openly their conception and strategy in the Hungarian political life, because their informal politics were hardly compatible with the judgement of the public with which they were forced to reckon with.

The Defeat of the Conservatives

The address to the throne did not arrive in Vienna. The upper house wished for its amendment in the lower house, but the latter set it aside and decided to discuss each of its items separately. For example, they set up a committee to collect and examine information about the grievances caused by the system of administrators.²⁹ The government had to forestall the statement of the committee presumably condemning the administrators' system as unconstitutional. Hungarian conservative government members therefore initiated negotiations with politicians of the opposition who were seen as likely to join a center party between the conservatives and the opposition, thereby invalidating the oppositionist's anti-government position. In order to provide the oppositionist negotiators with a basis of reference for a rapprochement to the government, the conservative politicians persuaded the sovereign to send a rescript to the diet.³⁰ The sovereign's address (signed by György Apponyi

²⁹ *FN* (1847/48), 132, *Ogy-i irományok* (1847/48), 45–46, Kossuth (1948–1989), 11:391–406, 408–409, 412–413.

³⁰ Varga (1971), 17–21 and Vörös (1980c), bk. 2:1213–1216.

and Ede Zsedényi) was dated January 30 and was read to the diet on February 1. The monarch stated that by appointing a greater than usual number of administrators, the aim was not to create a new governing system, nor to curtail the legal status of the counties or the authority of the *főispán*. His Majesty was expecting that this statement would reassure the members of parliament and they would return to normal legislative work. The rescript did not contain any noteworthy concession, nor did it give guarantees to the diet to thwart any past or future moves of the government to concentrate power with the evasion of the diet. The royal rescript was the expression of the sovereign's intention not to change Hungary's constitutional relations, together with the evaluation, notably, that the appointment of a large number of administrators was not unconstitutional but timely and necessary.³¹

The government wanted to repel the charge of breaching the constitution, and with the help of the sovereign's edict, the government's supporters almost succeeded. Four days after the announcement of the royal rescript in the diet, the district meeting of the lower house accepted it—true, with the margin of a single vote.³² However, the motion that was forwarded to the upper house was not a reply expressing the acquiescence or gratitude of the lower house majority, but the opposition's submission laying down claims to be met by the government. A week after the district meeting approval of the royal rescript, the lower house passed a motion for the amendment of the address to the throne, with a great majority of votes.³³

There was another attempt to reshuffle the power relations still in February, now outside the pro-government party, but it also failed because the competent leader of the opposition, Kossuth, put to good use the Italian and French events to restore the anti-absolutist and reformist unity of the opposition. On March 3, Kossuth introduced a new project of an address to the throne and the lower house passed and sent it over to the upper house on the same day.³⁴

The upper house did not discuss the lower house project and moved for a continuance on the pretext that the palatine chairing the diet, his deputy, the chief justice, and the chief treasurer were in Vienna.³⁵

The drafted address to the throne was filed among the dietal records the next day with the title *Proposed address to the throne on the tasks of*

³¹ *Ogy-i irományok* (1847/48), 61–62.

³² Kossuth (1948–1989), 11:499–515. Cf. Bártfai (1943), 2:622–624, 630–631.

³³ Kossuth (1948–1989), 11:515–539.

³⁴ Kossuth (1948–1989), 11:619–628, Varga (1971), and Gergely (1982), 121–155.

³⁵ Varga (1971), 28–45.

the diet. The draft reiterated the social and constitutional demands of *Opposition Manifesto* and *Instruction to the Pest county deputies*, and explicated in detail the demand for the abolition of absolutism formulated in general terms in the reply address approved on December 1. More explicitly than the preceding drafts, it was more outspoken about the absolutist government; it wished the introduction of representative government in Hungary and constitutional government in the Hereditary Lands. Without projections into the past and historical interpretations, it expressed the wish of legislation in defense of the trouble-laden dynasty and for the coordination of the governance of the empire and that of Hungary.

Circulars concerning the conservative conferences provided information on the informal politics of the Hungarian conservatives adjusted to the changing situation. These circulars were Chancellor Apponyi's memorandum of January 1847, the royal propositions dated November 11, the upper house message to the lower for amendment, and the sovereign's rescript dated January 30, 1848. On the other hand, the liberals *Opposition Manifesto*, *Instruction to the Pest county deputies*, the projects of the lower house for an address to the throne, and the submission draft of March 3, all displayed a tendency of increasingly more open and concrete forms (in harmony with the changing situation).

In the proposed address dated March 3, the lower house stated that Hungary had not been in the situation to express its constitutional claims because it had to see to the survival of the existing constitution for the past three hundred years. The government of the empire had never been—and was not—constitutional, which meant that the imperial government had never been in concord with the autonomy of the Hungarian government and with the Hungarian constitutional life. The lack of harmony had been impeding the development of constitutionality in Hungary, was threatening with incalculable consequences the sovereign's throne and the Hereditary Lands, and causing serious damage to the Kingdom of Hungary. The financial and political ills of the empire and the backwardness of Hungary had the same roots and they had the same remedy: at the root of the ills was the absolutism of the imperial system of government, and accordingly, the only remedy to the ills would be the introduction of constitutional government in the whole empire. To make the work of the Hungarian legislation more effective, the sovereign should appoint royal commissioners from among the members of the *Consilium Locumtenetiale* who could be partners in the legislative process and could provide the necessary information.

The most important reforms in Hungary—according to the proposed address—were general taxation, abolition of the feudal bonds, redemption

of housing, supplying the troops, administrative-political restructuring of the royal towns and free districts, the civil and political emancipation of the unprivileged, and the development of agriculture, industry, and trade. In addition, constitutionality had to develop towards real representation, the spiritual interests of the nation would have to be fostered on the basis of liberty, and the system of defense would need radical transformation on the basis of the peculiarities of the nation. It was high time to take stock of and responsibly handle the pay and requirements of the Hungarian rank and file. The basic precondition and essential guarantee of the reforms was a responsible government, a responsible Hungarian "Ministry."³⁶

In the first weeks of March the future of the diet was uncertain. Royal Councilor János Lónyay, deputy *főispán* of Bereg county, described the prospects of the Pozsony diet as well as his fears concerning the revolutionary events abroad and the address of the lower house in a letter of March 7 to his son Menyhért Lónyay, one of the moderately liberal members of the opposition in Pozsony:

[T]here can be presentiments but no positive knowledge about the duration of the diet. One group thinks its immediate dissolution should be effected because of the current events and the obvious revolutionary tendencies, others wish to wait out and try to find all kinds of pacifying and rectifying measures. Which opinion will win? I am more disturbed by the situation in Germany, by the events happening there, than the French movements. Was it wisdom and honesty that drove the leaders of the opposition to do at such a critical moment what they have done? To open such wide gates to subversion as they did? It is not hard to decide. Had this been done by people who could lose nothing in their desperate situation but might perhaps win something, it would be understandable; but to be encouraged and helped in their actions by aristocrats with large estates is something I cannot comprehend. The tendency of the proletariat is palpable, and may God help us to extricate ourselves from the trouble.³⁷

The upper house kept postponing, putting the lower house project of the address on the agenda, until it was decided in Vienna what to do. Though the opinion of the Viennese statesmen was not at all doubtful, the decision was not theirs to make this time.³⁸ Under the chairmanship of the palatine, the upper house convened at last on March 14 and consented to the submission to the throne.³⁹ On the same day, both houses selected members for a

³⁶ *Ogy-i irományok* (1847/48), 70–71.

³⁷ János Lónyay to Menyhért Lónyay, Vienna, Mar. 7, 1848, MOL, Filmtár [State Archives of Hungary, Film Collection], 34861, Manó Kónyi's bequest, documents of Menyhért Lónyay; Cf. Bártfai (1943), 2:641, 645–653.

³⁸ Szőgyény-Marich (1903), 48–55 and Andics (1952–1981), 1:35–36.

³⁹ *KRN* (1847/48), 167, Károlyi (1936), 3–17, Varga (1971), 28–45.

delegation that traveled to Vienna the next day to hand over the address to the king and bring back his reply.⁴⁰ An unexpected change was caused by the revolution that broke out the previous day in Vienna, and in Pest on the day that the delegation left for Vienna. That the dietal delegation headed by the palatine was successful can be attributed to several factors of varying weight (first of all the crisis and fears of the imperial government) including the legend that a peasant army was gathering in the field of Rákos under Petőfi's command to fight against the *illustrious magnates*.⁴¹

On March 17, King Ferdinand V appointed Palatine Stephen regent plenipotentiary, and the palatine appointed the leader of the upper house opposition, Count Lajos Batthyány, president of the responsible "ministry." The conservative Hungarian statesmen left their posts, but their influence on the Hungarian policy of the empire did not cease. On March 13, Hungarian Chancellor György Apponyi, just like Metternich, resigned. Before withdrawing into the background, Baron Samu Jósika persuaded the members of the *Staatskonferenz* to advise the sovereign to appoint Colonel Baron Josip Jelačić as Ban of Croatia. With that, the *ancien régime* bequeathed several traps to the Hungarian government: the socially anachronistic Military Frontier Zone was directly controlled by the *Kriegsrat* in Vienna, and Croatia, of a peculiar legal status, was put into strong hands.⁴² Underdeveloped Transylvania—the model state of the conservatives in 1847—laden with social and nationality tensions and earlier manipulated by Jósika dexterously, had to be conquered by the Austrian troops, not independently of an ethnic civil war.

After the installation of the responsible government, the diet in Pozsony continued its legislative work under renewed conditions. Széchenyi and the centralists who had earlier thought that the modernization of Hungary could only be promoted in subordination to the given imperial government were now freed from the trap of adjusting to absolutism. The conservatives lost their support with the shaking of the absolutist positions, and as a result, they were forced to give up their earlier persistently represented claims to a social organization based on the system of the privileged and to a state organized from above to serve the interests of Cisleithanian absolutism. In the forums of political public the conserva-

⁴⁰ *Ogy-i irományok* (1847/48), 77–78, Károlyi (1936), 3–32, Varga (1971), 46–76.

⁴¹ Károlyi (1936), 203–207. The issue was analyzed in its full complexity by Varga (1971), 94–145.

⁴² Szőgyény-Marich (1903), 52–79. Cf. Gyula Miskolczy (1927), 1:412–413, 417–418, 424, (n.d.), 152–175, Szabad (1981), Varga (1993), 77–92.

tives became weightless, but they continued to influence politics informally and some aligned themselves with the earlier liberal reformers. The leader of the upper house conservatives, Antal Szécsen, advised his comrades in an open letter to approve of the abolition of feudal bondage, as it was now an accomplished fact.⁴³ The program of the liberal reformers led by Kossuth came into force adapting to the new possibilities in the spring of 1848.

⁴³ Antal Szécsen, "Nyílt levél elvbarátaimhoz [Open letter to my comrades]," *BH*, Apr. 18, 1848.

Myth in the Making

The Conservatives in 1848–49

During the period of cooperation between the sovereign and the legislature in the spring and summer of 1848—a cooperation far from being devoid of tensions—the Hungarian conservatives retreated into the background, but in the autumn when an explicit conflict had burst out between Vienna and Pest, the overwhelming majority of conservatives pledged loyalty to the monarch. Most of them chose dynastic loyalty even when it no longer meant fidelity to the legitimate Hungarian king but—after Ferdinand V's resignation on December 2 and Francis Joseph I's accession—created a constitutionally entangled situation. Those Hungarian conservatives who became officials of an establishment imposed by the occupying forces committed themselves to the service of an absolute monarch. The majority of the first and second ranking Hungarian conservative politicians were among the adversaries of the Hungarian government and parliament waging a defensive war. During the victory of the despotism, nobody had any doubts which side the one-time Conservative Party had taken in the critical times. Though the contemporaries did not have information of the details, they had no illusions about the role of the confidential and secret councilors of Austrian absolutism: Count György Apponyi, Count János Barkóczy, Count Emil Dessewffy, and Antal Szécsen, as well as Baron Samu Jósika.¹ The former conservative Vice Chancellor László Szögyény was the leader of the civil administration created during the military rule of Windischgrätz.² Baron Pál Sennyey, another conservative politician, directed one of the departments of his administration.³

¹ Wertheimer (1915–1916a, b), Andics (1952–1981), (1973), 437–490.

² Szögyény-Marich (1917), 3–19, Andics (1952–1981).

³ Szögyény-Marich (1917), 7–8, 179–180, 210, Andics (1952–1981), vols. 1–2. Cf. Asbóth (1892), 543–570.

The leading figures of the conservative camp did not wish to conceal their activity as they were convinced that they were saving the nation. The list of the imperial commissioners during the Windischgrätz regime, Haynau's chief commissioners of the districts and army commissioners, included names of fourteen known conservative politicians.⁴ Far shorter was the list containing the conservatives who did not take on public roles in support of absolutism and instead withdrew from politics.⁵

Probably the most intriguing and most obscure story of the 1848/49 activity of the former conservative party echelon is that of Baron Miklós Vay, Guard of the Crown. In the summer of 1848 he was the Transylvanian commissioner of the Hungarian government, and in September Batthyány considered him for a ministerial post. Parallel with appointing Count Ferenc Lamberg royal commissioner, the sovereign appointed him prime minister. Vay could not enter into office because the Hungarian diet did not acknowledge its dissolution and the new appointments as legitimate, and furthermore, the Transylvanian events trapped him there. First he was arrested by the Hungarians for being the emperor's commissioner in Transylvania (but his committal for trial was prevented by the war events), and later the Austrian court-martial sentenced him to death. The emperor's pardon changed the sentence to four years imprisonment of which Miklós Vay had to sit in jail for less than a year.⁶ Sándor Lipthay, as chief editor of *Nemzeti Újság* from 1845–1848, supported the Batthyány government in the spring of 1848.⁷ Rather surprisingly, the nominal editor of the 1841–1842 volumes of *Világ*, Ignác Jablanczy, the author of articles written in the most unmannerly tone, was sentenced to eight years imprisonment by the Austrian military tribunal as he was an informant of the Hungarian government on foreign matters while captain in the Hungarian national guard.⁸

The political place and role of the known politicians of the Hungarian conservative camp in 1848/49 was unambiguous. The decisive majority acted to promote the victory of the imperial and tsarist troops. It was a chance for them to conclusively defeat the liberal opponent and it was also a record to cash in on later. There was no misconception of illusion associated with the role of the conservatives during the war. The later legends of their

⁴ Andics (1952–1981).

⁵ Révai (1911–1935), 7:612, 17:28, 19:730, Véssey (1944), 48–213, esp. 86–91.

⁶ Vay (1899), 20–31, 179–207, 211–305.

⁷ Dezsényi (1941), 25–29.

⁸ Kosáry (1979), 739–740.

good acts during the revolution were projected back in time from the Hungarian conservatives' roles and ideology during the absolutist period.

In Opposition

After the imposition of the Olmütz (Olomouc) constitution on March 4, 1849, the leaders of the Hungarian conservatives were offended that the emperor had issued a constitution over their head, the contents of which were unacceptable to them, anyway. This also meant that the conservatives were excluded from the echelon of the political forces of the new administration. When on December 31, 1851 Francis Joseph I formally repealed the constitution (that had never come into force) and declared his own absolute rule, the conservatives who had been urging for the annulment of the constitution had to realize that their neglect was meant for the long term. Their resistance to absolutism increased. The Austrian power hitting Hungary donned the disguise of neo-Josephism with reference to national equality, the principles of civilization, the building of a bureaucratic administration, and reviving the integrative policy of Germanization. Claiming that the Hungarians had forfeited their rights with the revolution, absolutism treated Hungary as a conquered area, and deprived it of its territorial integrity, sovereign statehood, and inner autonomy. In the scramble for positions in the imperial bureaucracy, the Hungarian conservatives were pushed into the background by the advocates of neo-Josephism and thus came close to the Czech and Polish conservative aristocratic politicians who were calling for the aristocratic federalization of the empire.⁹

They expressed their reserve towards the government in petitions in the spring of 1849 in the paper *Figyelmező*, which was committed to the side of the imperial troops. In February 1850, Emil Dessewffy explicated the former and current roles of the conservatives. In *Lloyd*, published in Vienna, and *Allgemeine Zeitung* of Augsburg, he published Metternich's aphorisms concerning Hungary.¹⁰

⁹ Szabad (1979), 437–444, 491–494, 652–660.

¹⁰ [Anonymous], “Töredék egy magyar notabilitás leveléből [Fragment of a letter by a Hungarian notability],” *Figyelmező*[F], Jan. 26, 1849, [Anonymous], “Gróf Zichy Ödön nekrológja [Obituary of Count Ödön Zichy],” *F*, Feb. 4, 1849; [Anonymous], “Íme egy mágnás, comme il faut [Behold a magnate...],” *F*, Feb. 5, 1849; [Anonymous], “Buda-pest, febr. 17,” *F*, Feb. 18, 1849, [Anonymous], “A Duna mellől [From along the Danube],” *F*, Feb. 20, 1849; [Anonymous], “A Lloyd következő cikkét hozza egy március előtti konzervatív magyarnak: ... [The Lloyd has an article of a pre-March conservative Hungarian],” pts. 1 and 2, *F*, Feb. 21 and 22, 1849; [Anonymous], “A magyar or-

Pál Somssich voiced his views in a pamphlet. He claimed that in 1848/49 the troublemakers hurled Hungary into an illegal revolutionary state and the sovereign took up arms to restore legitimacy. Hungary had the legal right to autonomy within the empire. Hungary's independence was the demand not only of the conservatives but all responsible Hungarian politicians. The conservatives had long been advocating this independence together with an emphasis on the acceptance of the imperial relationship. The revolution had broken ties with the past and the historical right, and the sovereign had to use arms to pacify the country terrorized by the dictatorship of the subversive party. Pacification had been completed but the only possible legitimate status of Hungary— independence within the empire—had not been restored. The imperial ministry was pursuing an integrative policy: the power was centralized, the municipal authorities eliminated, and administration Germanized with reference to equal national rights. Somssich wrote that the revolution quashed in the name of historical rights was not followed by the restoration of the legitimate state but by a centralizing and Germanizing policy aimed at integration in the empire, whereas the only guarantee of the unity of the monarchy was the assertion of historical rights, and that could not be based on the abolition of these rights in Hungary.¹¹

ganizáció kérdéséhez [To the question of Hungarian organization],” *F*, Mar. 6, 1849; [Anonymous], “Egy fájdalommal telt kebelnek szözata [Address by someone overcome by grief],” *F*, Mar. 7, 1849; [Anonymous], “Március 15-e 1848-ban és március 15-e 1849-ben [March 15th in 1848 and March 15th in 1849],” *F*, Mar. 16, 1849; [Anonymous], “Egy magyarnak levele Magyarországról és a birodalmi alkotmányról [Letter of a Hungarian about Hungary and the imperial constitution],” *F*, Mar. 17, 1849; [Anonymous], “Az augsb[urgi] Allgemeine Zeitung 66-dik számában következő érdekes levélre tétettünk figyelmessé.” [The following article in the Augsb. Allgemeine Zeitung ...],” *F*, Mar. 18, 1849; Emil Dessewffy, “Bécs, márc. 11. [Vienna, Mar. 11th],” *F*, Mar. 27, 1849; [Anonymous], “Demagógiai kacérkodás és lekenyerezés (Vonások Kossuth életéből) [Demagogic conceit and appeasement. (Features of Kossuth's life)],” *F*, Mar. 18, 1849; [Anonymous], “Angol ítéletek hazai viszonyainkról (Ausztria és Magyarország) [English judgement about the Hungarian situation (Austria and Hungary)],” *F*, Mar. 30, 1849; [Anonymous], “Magyarország és a birodalmi alkotmány [Hungarian and the imperial constitution],” pts. 1 and 2, *F*, Mar. 31 and Apr. 3, 1849; [Anonymous], “Egy konzervatív magyarnak észrevételei a birodalmi alkotmányra, különösen ennek 71. §-ára nézve [Comments by a conservative Hungarian about the imperial constitution, esp. article 71],” *F*, Apr. 4, 1849; Graf Emil Dessewffy: “Offenes Sendschreiben an den ‘Lloyd,’” pts. 1–9, *Der Lloyd*, Feb. 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, and 17, 1850. The articles were also published in the *Allgemeine Zeitung*.

¹¹ Somssich (1850). Cf. Zsedényi (1850, 1851), Andrassy (1850), and Szécsen (1851).

In their memorandum forwarded to the sovereign in 1850, the Hungarian conservatives, including Sándor Liphay, argued similarly but more cautiously than Somssich. They condemned both the revolution and the Germanizing absolutism with the plea of historical legitimacy. The emperor, however, did not appreciate either this or their later submission of homage.¹²

The Hungarian conservatives' intention to enhance their influence within the imperial bureaucracy was linked up with their conviction that the safeguard of the Habsburg Empire was not direct integration into the empire but the partial restoration of the pre-1848 status quo, the relative independence of the Kingdom of Hungary inside the empire. Since the Hungarian liberals were silenced at home, and the muted Hungarian public had no chance to articulate the swirl of suppressed emotions and elaborate them in the form of ideas and programs, the Hungarian conservatives were in the position of initiating a new conservative compromise between the oppressive power and the Hungarian public as a national party, as *Hungarian* conservatives fighting against the imperial policy of integration. They were (or could be) the undervalued representatives of the Hungarian matters in Vienna. They tried to show themselves to the Hungarian and foreign public as the guardians of the Hungarian interests, the national kingdom, and national traditions. The Hungarian conservative politicians—the only Hungarian politicians tolerated by the power—featured in national conservative roles within the frames of the cultural and economic life permitted by the absolutist government. From the middle of the decade Count Emil Dessewffy was the president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and several conservative figures (among the patrons of the Kazinczy and Berzsenyi festivities, the organizers of pilgrimage to Maria Zell, and the supporters of the St. Stephen Society) can be found among the members appointed with the sovereign's assent to the Academy. The Academy itself was “purged” after 1849 and subordinated to state control.¹³

When at the end of the 1850s it became clear that the attempt at imperial integration masterminded by the Minister of the Interior, Alexander Bach, had failed in the context of the foreign political, military, and financial crisis of the empire, the question of how to handle Hungary was put on the agenda again in the leading circles of the empire. This increased the

¹² Liphay (1864). The author of the anonymous pamphlet was identified by Ágnes Deák. Török (1864), 45–59. Szabad (1979), 437–450, 453–462, 491–494, Kosáry (1981), 214–228, and Ágnes Deák (2005).

¹³ Szabad (1979), 609–611.

political weight of the Hungarian conservatives who had been urging for a new conservative compromise from the beginning of the decade. After the issuing of the October Diploma, the leaders of the conservative group were appointed to councilors of the empire's Hungarian policy. Count Antal Szécsen (who assumed a decisive role in the enlarged imperial council in the summer of 1860) controlled the Hungarian matters as minister without portfolio. Count György Apponyi (Hungarian chancellor before 1848) became the first dignitary of the country, Lord Chief Justice, in the absence of a palatine. Baron Miklós Vay headed the newly formed Hungarian Chancellery. György Mailáth was to lead the restored *Consilium Locumtenentiale*. Count Emil Dessewffy, a decisive personality of the group, remained in the background. The bannerets and newly appointed *főispán* were all conservatives.

The influence of the Hungarian conservatives lasted until it turned out that they were unable to enact their initiative. The moment the Hungarian public had a chance to express its opinion, it rejected both their effort and the (pre-1848) conservative grounds for a compromise. The conservatives were in key positions from October 1860 to August 1861, resigning about the same time as the Hungarian parliament convoked in the spring of 1861 was dissolved. A provisional absolutist government was in effect in the country until finally a compromise was made between the leading imperial circles and the Hungarian liberals led by Ferenc Deák. Act 12 spelling out the common interests with the empire, in a manner reminiscent of chief justice Count György Apponyi's memoirs of late 1862, was put into effect and the laws of 1848 were reinterpreted accordingly. The Hungarian liberals' goals, programs, and strategies had been modified by this time. Their program during the absolutist period, gaining ground in Hungarian political life, was not focused on the unification of interests (agreement with the nationalities and the peasantry) but on ensuring and defending the constitution.

In preparing and concluding the compromise, the conservatives played a decisive though not exclusive role. From 1864 they published a paper in Vienna, *Die Debatte*, to represent their views and popularize the compromise. The negotiations with Deák were initiated by chief district commissioner Baron Antal Augusz, former deputy *főispán* of Tolna. More importantly, in 1865 the conservatives could take the helm again, and thus prepare the deputies before the convocation of the diet concerning the consent to the *Ausgleich*. Having drawn the lesson from the failure of 1860/61, Chancellor György Mailáth and *Consilium* president Baron Pál Sennyey neglected the restoration of the authority of the counties before

the convocation of the diet, lest county resistance might emerge against the compromise. The assembling Hungarian diet had a narrower base than earlier and it was politically more homogeneous. The liberal advocates of the compromise achieved majority with the help of the absolutist state machinery run by the conservative chief administrators and enacted the *Ausgleich* between the sovereign and the nation in 1867.¹⁴

The conservative compromise initiated by the Hungarian conservatives was realized six and a half years after the first attempt, the October Diploma, towards the end of the second decade of absolutism. However, the cause of the compromise could not be triumphant before the pushing back of the conservatives and the ascendancy of the liberals.

“Outcasts” of the *Ausgleich*

Most of the living members of the former Conservative Party were to the right of Deák’s party and when Deák’s party merged with the left-center to form the Liberal Party, some of them separated and established a right-wing opposition party led by Pál Sennyey. Pál Sennyey was a candidate for the premier’s post with quite good chances, and later Count Albert Apponyi (György Apponyi’s son), as well. It was a weightless formation, thus in the 1870s the conservative opposition was not a considerable political force.

Many of the conservatives were already deceased—Baron Samu Jósika, former Transylvanian chancellor, and László Czindery, *főispán* of Somogy county, died in 1860. While Sennyey’s party played a negligible role in the Hungarian politics of the period, the majority of the living members of the earlier conservative group rose to national dignities of the Hungarian Kingdom as confidants of the king: Emil Dessewffy, the ideologue of the group in 1866 as president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences; Count György Andrassy, former *főispán* of Sáros county, chief justice from 1863; and Count János Barkóczy, imperial councilor and Lord Steward in 1872. György Apponyi, former Hungarian chancellor, chief justice from 1861–1863, and member of the directorial board of the Academy, retired from politics in 1863. “Russian usher” Count Ferenc Zichy was the *főispán* of Nógrád county from 1861, ambassador to Con-

¹⁴ Szabad (1967), (1979), 639–768, (1985). An important source of the history of the Compromise is Menyhért Lónyay’s political diary, MOL, Filmtár [State Archives of Hungary, Film Collection], 37153–37156. Cf. Cieger (2007). On the prehistory of the *Ausgleich*: Csorba (1984), 423–445, Sarlós (1987), esp. 118–161), Hanák (2001), and Ágnes Deák (2005). Cf. Evans (2006), 266–292.

stantinople in the 1870s, and chief treasurer in the next decade.¹⁵ Ede Zsedényi, imprisoned by absolutism in 1859 for his protest against the royal patent of the Protestant religion, served as councilor of the Chancellery in 1860/61 (just as in the last years of the Reform era). He was active first in the Deák party and later in the Liberal Party. Baron Miklós Vay was chancellor in 1860/61 and president of the upper house later. From 1867 till his death in 1883, György Mailáth was chief justice and president of the upper house, member, later honorary member of the Academy's board, and member and later president of the St. Stephen Society. László Szógyény was vice chancellor in 1847, member of the imperial council from 1851 (similarly to Count Ferenc Zichy, and Count Móric Almásy), vice president from 1851, vice chancellor again in 1860/61, vice president of the upper house from 1875, president from 1883, chief treasurer from 1884, and chief justice from 1888. Count Manó Péchy, former administrator of Zemplén county, *főispán* of Abaúj county in 1860/61 and 1865, was Transylvanian commissioner from 1867 and government party representative of Kolozsvár from 1872–1881 and of Kassa from 1881–1884. Baron Pál Sennyey was a deputy from 1872, candidate to the prime minister's post, then chief justice from 1884 to his death in 1888 and president of the upper house. Pál Somssich was a conservative deputy and *Consilium* councilor, a pro-Deák party politician from 1861, speaker of the lower house from 1869 to 1872, and a member of the conservative opposition in the 1870s.¹⁶

Although the conservative opposition founded by Baron Pál Sennyey was not a considerable factor, the above sketch may suffice to confirm that the former Hungarian conservatives were among the top dignitaries of the country in the 1870s and 1880s. Though they were not in the key positions, they had enough influence to contribute to the birth of a highly effective new myth. This myth was fed by the idealization of the self-image of the former conservative group established during the period of absolutism. The first resounding advocates of this view appeared in the 1870s and 1880s. In the first decade of the twentieth century the myth underwent further development and in the period between the two world wars it was certified by the stamp of official scholarship.

¹⁵ Those conservative aristocrats who joined the headquarters of the Russian occupation army in Hungary in 1849 were nicknamed "Russian ushers," meaning traitors.

¹⁶ Révai (1911–1935), 1:600, 757, 2:373, 617, 11:41–42, 13:289–290, 16:751, 17:28, 427–428, 715–716, 19:100, 674, 730. For the interpretation of Pál Somssich's role, see Komjáthy (1983).

The Process of Mythmaking

Parallel to the shrinking of the official political and public memory of the Reform era and the events of 1848/49, and the growth of the alternatives of imperial integration and conservative compromise, the former—unpopular—role of the conservatives assumed mythic dimensions. As there was no alternative in the absolutistic period, their actual role in the Reform era and 1848/49 gradually sunk into oblivion, and their uncritical evaluation and the embellished legend that developed from it came to rest on their role during that time. The ideals were chosen selectively: the idealized figure of Count Aurél Dessewffy, whose premature death barred him from being compromised in 1848/49, and the cult of Count István Széchenyi, who was subsumed among the conservatives rather arbitrarily, already enriched the image of Hungarian conservatives together with the idealized concept of the former centralists. Bringing the Hungarian conservatives, Széchenyi, and the centralists under one roof was an oversimplification, a blending of different qualities. True, there were similarities, which, however, should not have veiled over the considerable differences. In the Reform era, the intention to influence absolutism and the illusion that it was possible was an aspect of Széchenyi's political views for a lengthier period of time and of that of the centralists for a while. In the 1840s Széchenyi increasingly, the centralists occasionally, insisted on winning the benevolence and—as it turned out later, the illusory—reformist disposition of the absolutist government. The foundation for the rehabilitation of the conservatives and the indirect (and partly direct) myth evolving around them was the growing interest of official Hungarian political thinking in turning the goals and achievements of the Reform age liberals in the historic years of 1848/49 into mere platitudes. There was increasing pressure to draw the conclusion—which only few did openly—that it was the Hungarian conservatives who had represented the only possible solution for the Hungarian nation's survival. The conservative supporters of imperial integration feature as the champions of gradual, sober progress in the picture painted later by those who could not or would not break away from the forced intellectual orbits. The first modern representatives of the conservative political tradition earned the name of great realists well after their political presence, when the facts that contradicted this evaluation gradually sunk into oblivion.

The myth of the conservatives can be found in an explicit form in the writings of János Asbóth, the ideologue of the Sennyey-Apponyi party, from the 1870s and 1880s. Asbóth also incorporated the theses of two

Reform age conservative journalists, Károly Vida and János Török, written in glorification of conservative political activity in the 1850s and 1860s. The legend of the conservatives also appears in a few articles of liberals, e.g., Farkas Deák, as well as Ferenc Pulszky who apparently drew on an early 1850s writing of the centralist Antal Csengery. In the early twentieth century, the mythic image of the conservatives was further reinforced and modified in a study by Mihály Réz, professor of political science, one of the ideologues of István Tisza's circle.¹⁷

The life of Count Antal Szécsen is emblematic. His brother, Károly, was killed fighting for the imperial troops in Italy, while the father of his future wife, Colonel Ferenc Lamberg, the plenipotentiary royal commissioner of Hungary (appointed unlawfully), was lynched by a Pest crowd on September 28, 1848. During his journey in Great Britain in the autumn of 1849 he had to justify to an indignant public the execution of his former adversary of the upper house and premier of the first responsible Hungarian government, Count Lajos Batthyány. In 1860/61 he was the empire's minister without portfolio, in 1885 he was appointed Grand Marshal at the Court, also president of the Hungarian Historical Society and member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the *Kisfaludy* Society. He resigned from the latter two posts because these bodies had been represented at Kossuth's funeral. At the beginning of the twentieth century and in the 1910s, Antal Szécsen was recalled not as a former conservative politician but as an idealized figure of national scholarship and literature. The twentieth century conservative historian and ideologue Gyula Szekfű looked upon him as one of his models of scholarship and style.¹⁸

¹⁷ Csengery (1851), Török (1852, 1858), Vida (1860a, b, 1862), Pulszky (1874), 41–56, Asbóth (1876), 121–162; (1892), 69–145, 543–570, Fiáth (1878), Kleinszky (1879), Szécsen (1884), Farkas Deák (1885), Réz (1909), 355; Szádeczky (1912), and Apponyi (1926, 1933).

¹⁸ Thallóczy (1901) and Révai (1911–1935), 17:427–428; Gyula Szekfű to Frigyes Riedl, Vienna, Feb. 3, 1913, MTAKK, Ms 491; Gyula Szekfű to Károly Tagányi, Vienna, Aug. 23, 1913, EKK, H. 231; Andics (1965), 410–411, 430–432, 434–436, 442–445, Várkonyi (1973), 1:211–212, 217–218, 2:57–58, 209–210, 240, Szabad (1979), 491–492, 652–660. Cf. Szécsen (1881, 1887), Szekfű (1916).

Epilogue

Symbolic Link between Three Types of Conservatives (1927)

The below quoted letter was written by the son of Count Emil Dessewffy, Count Aurél Dessewffy, Jr. agrarian politician and the vice president of the Association of Hungarian Landowners. Count Aurél Dessewffy, Jr. was one of the leading members of the early twentieth-century Hungarian neo-conservative political group whose ideology was no longer built on the traditions of loyalty to the throne and the altar, and who organized their party and a newspaper for goals other than the strengthening of the position of an aristocratic group pursuing cabinet politics. The younger Count Aurél Dessewffy was the kind of neo-conservative who deemed the rejection of modernity as up-to-date, progressive, and supportive of the nation's interest. He was a neo-conservative who spoke on behalf of the nation as an advocate of centralized social policy, interest safeguarding organizations, fixed economic forms and central redistribution governed by social sensitivity, solidarity, and altruism towards the losers of the competition.¹ His views fit in the sequence that ranged from the Anti-Semitic Party to the Conservative Catholic People's Party and to the agrarians.² He appeared to find the justi-

¹ Miklós Szabó (1971, 1989, 2003)

² Miklós Szabó (2003). See also another neo-conservative agrarian politician's letter: "I can't remember having read in the past 50 years a book more to my views than your most valuable work, *Three generations: The history of a declining age*. I should like to express my heartfelt gratitude for the delight I have taken in studying your thoroughgoing arguments. I do hope you will kindly excuse me if I take the liberty of pointing out a few mistakes. In my defense, I can say that since 1870 I have followed particularly our economic policy with keen interest, contributing ideas on every major issue of the exchange, customs, tax, railway, and agriculture, both in the lower and upper houses, and in national economic unions, and I have taken an active part in every meeting of experts. Such a record might perhaps entitle me to venture a few remarks ... So it seemed ... that in Hungary... in the past years political activity has only been pursued by counts, but in fact they have been mainly confined to the parliament and the papers. Actual politics has been controlled by the Jewry and the Freemasonry, which

fication of his view and the continuation of his effort in the synthesis of the various currents of the neo-conservatives: the Hungarian conservative master narrative of the twentieth century. He addressed his letter to the author of the narrative, Gyula Szekfű:

Allow me to disturb you with a request, Your Honor. I should like to ask your advice. Researching my father Count Emil Dessewffy's posthumous papers, I have found a document that has not yet been published but would deserve to be shown to the public. My father was the editor of a conservative paper before '48 and after the dethronement in Debrecen, he was doing his best in association with the decisive circles in Vienna for the reconstruction of Hungary already in '49. On April 6, 1850 he drafted the first memorandum that was submitted to Francis Joseph with many signatures of the land-owners of the country; he also worked out a project on how the military commander of the period, Welden, should handle the Hungarian matters. It was rejected and the integration in the Monarchy was effected by a royal patent. It was my father who drafted the October Diploma, which was rejected by Deák, etc. I should be grateful if Your Honor would recommend somebody to me to whom I could hand over these documents and who—not evaluating my father's activity through the spectacle of freemasons and liberals—would elaborate and publish them. My father passed away in 1866, but he greatly contributed to the Compromise of 1867.³

has led to revolutions and communism. I took over the management of my estates in 1870 at the age of twenty; I have always used my 38,000 hold possessions [roughly 16,000 hectares] distributed in eight counties as manorial land, striving to have it tilled as intensely as possible. I expressed my views on every important economic question, yet I have hardly had any influence on the events. Nothing but what the Jewry and the Freemasonry dictated could take place. I herewith enclose a pamphlet: A twelve-year struggle against the gamble in unsecured futures at the exchanges. I published it in Hungarian (Budapest), German (Berlin), and French (Paris). In Budapest not a single book vendor had the courage to sell it. In Paris the Freemasons bought it up and destroyed it. This compilation will inform you what has caused the strengthening of the Jewish race all over the world, as this race almost alone is engaged in pursuing the gambling game at the exchange. I also enclose an open letter I have written about the menace of the Jewish expansion. Since then, of course, I have been tagged in the papers either as the country's greatest blackguard or as a silly idiot." Róbert Zelenski to Gyula Szekfű, Budapest, June 1, 1921, EKK, G. 628. Cf. "Thank you for your kind and excessively flattering lines of the 15th. I am pleased that your interesting work is having a second edition and that you will take into consideration my experiences gathered over 50 years," Róbert Zelenski to Gyula Szekfű, Balatonfüred, Sept. 21, 1921, EKK, G. 628. Also: "I acknowledge with thanks the receipt of the second edition of *Three generations*. I have not had time to read it but I glean from the introduction that you are the target of similar persecution to me. You are mentioning me in appreciative terms as I see, but I will return to this later when I hope I will have the good fortune to visit You, Sir, in Vienna," Róbert Zelenski to Gyula Szekfű, Temesújfalú, July 1, 1922, EKK, G. 628.

³ Aurél Dessewffy, Jr. to Gyula Szekfű, Büdszentmihály, Sept. 7, 1927, EKK, G. 628. Cf. Szekfű (1922), 195–198, (1933), 153, 162–166, 428.

The Conservative Master Narrative (1920, 1933)

Gyula Szekfű, historian, the author of a still highly influential pamphlet published in 1920 (and republished many times since) claimed that the blame for the disintegration of historical Hungary was not merely to be laid on the post-World War I events: the reasons were rooted deeper, in the 1840s. The new world replacing the feudal establishment was born under a false conception and ill-advised politics. The emotional policy making of political recalcitrance boiling inside the Hungarians against the Habsburgs since 1526 was unleashed by foreign ideas (first of all French liberalism), formalistic notions of nationality, and liberty adopted in the liberal atmosphere of the 1840s. As dictated by the requirements of popularity and their liberalist conviction, the Hungarian liberals took a position in opposition to Vienna and the nationalities on an emotional basis, whereas realistic policy making would have avoided the emotional at any cost. The Hungarian liberals of the Reform era and the pro-independence opposition in the dualist period disrupted and strained the relationship with the Habsburg Empire and the nationalities, wasting their own and their adversaries' energies on an utterly futile struggle. The politics of passions and the ensuing political strife and hostility with the nationalities led to Világos, the defeat of the Revolution, and the following absolutism. The Compromise gave rise to independent statehood and the possibility of half a century of peaceful creative work. This was poisoned by emotional politics, because the politics of the constitutional opposition diverted the attention with its recalcitrance and national demagoguery from what was possible, necessary, and indispensable—the organization of the Hungarian society and defense against the nationalities and the Jewry. The supporters of the Compromise could not put the possibilities gained by it to good use, as their energies were absorbed by the defense of a futile constitutional struggle. As a result, the Jewry gained increasing ground via expanding capitalism and its cultural industry, and the nationalities strengthened in their anti-Hungarian cultural and political development. The Jewish radicalism of the social scientist Oszkár Jászi and the irresponsible nationalism of grievances of Mihály Károlyi in 1918 jointly led to the disintegration of the Hungarian state and to the Soviet Republic of 1919.⁴

This pamphlet covers the period of Hungarian history from the 1840s to the 1910s, describing it as an age of decline. The author, the historian Gyula Szekfű, combined the anti-liberal theses and arguments of the Hun-

⁴ Szekfű (1920). Cf. Kosáry (1943).

garian conservatives of the 1840s, the subsequent Kossuth image of the centralists (especially of Zsigmond Kemény) formed in the neo-absolutist era, anti-capitalism, anti-Semitism, and the Széchenyi cult of the late nineteenth-century neo-conservatives (the Anti-Semitic Party, the Catholic People's Party, and the agrarians), and kneaded them into a unified synthesis.⁵ His history of decline became the master narrative of various types of conservative and ethno-protectionist discourses in the period between the two world wars. Its conservative and ethno-protectionist interpreters and those arguing with the narrative kept reinterpreting the theme, genre, and argumentation presented in the pamphlet. *Three Generations* became the canon of the *national character discourse* about the disintegration of historical Hungary and the Hungarian national specificities, and it is the canon for many even today.⁶

⁵ Miklós Szabó (1971, 2003) and Dénes (1976).

⁶ *Three Generations* drew a great amount of primarily appreciative responses. The press and periodicals of the counterrevolution were almost one at hailing it. At the same time, the pioneer of Hungarian sociography, Róbert Braun, presented Szekfű's works in *Huszadik Század* in 1918 as the conservative revision of Hungarian historiography. Four years later he wrote about Szekfű's pamphlet: "this book is nothing but a one-sided indictment against liberalism ... the talent and subject matter of the author would usher him towards the pamphlet, were he not devoid of the gift of sincerity." Writer Zsigmond Móricz, forerunner of the populist writers' movement, commented: "One cannot forgive Gyula Szekfű for clattering under the mill, when he ought to have been milling silently and diligently." Szekfű's professor Henrik Marczali wished that the author return to the pursuit of scientific historiography: "His method is always the same. He has a ready stencil into which he fits the figures or ideas and then tints them pink, pale or, if radical, tar black ... On the whole, it is an interesting, at places finely written, but for most part cumbersome, work. One feels the author's laboring to fill the predetermined form. After all, this is an ad hoc work, too. I wish honestly and with all my heart that he should return to objective scientific historiography as soon as possible and achieve recognition in it as he deserves." In his book published in Chicago in 1929, Oszkár Jászi argued heatedly against the basic tenets of *Three generations*: "A recent writer of the Hungarian counter-revolution, Professor Julius Szekfű, undertook the task of demonstrating in his book, *Three generations* (Budapest, 1922), in Hungarian, just the opposite thesis than the one advocated in the present work. Namely that the chief cause of the Hungarian tragedy was partly an excess of the liberal spirit of the West and the exuberance of certain racial sins of the Magyars (vanity, conceit, short-lived zeal, self-deception, megalomania, disregard of reality, inertia, contempt of productive work) combined with the corrosive influences of Jewish radicalism and internationalism. The falseness of this interpretation seems manifest to me. To speak of an excess of liberalism in Hungarian institutions is the greatest possible self-deception. On the other hand the so-called racial sins, though really existing, were not the emanation of a mysterious principle but the historical consequences of the social, economic, and intellectual facts of a war-like feudal society, previously

The onset of decline was the age of Reform and 1848/49, previously hailed as the most glorious period of Hungarian history. The standard measure was Széchenyi petrified, condensed into points, and stylized in conservative terms, while the paragon of emotional politics in Hungarian liberalism was Kossuth (demonized in Zsigmond Kemény's pamphlets during neo-absolutism and in János Asbóth's pamphlets written in the dualist period). The centralists were liberals but of the less dangerous type, since they were far from the recalcitrant politics of grievances.

The answer to the question "In comparison to what was the period between the 1840s and the 1910s a period of deterioration?" can be found in *Hungarian history* published in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Szekfű declared in it that the regeneration of the Hungarian nation and the reconstruction of the country after the hundred and fifty years of Ottoman rule was the outcome of the "great Hungarian" politicians' endeavors under the reign of the Habsburg house in the eighteenth century.⁷ This equilibrium was disrupted by a novel variant of "small Hungarian" policy making relying on *kuruc* separatism, the Turks, Transylvania, and Protestantism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, condensing into the Hungarian liberalism of the nineteenth century. The *kuruc* supporters of the politics of emotions and grievances made the continuation of peaceful creative work impossible, sapping the Hungarian political forces in senseless struggles leading nowhere, hence exposing the Hungarians to the looming threats of Jewish capitalism and the nationalities, which, in turn, led to the two revolutions and Trianon.⁸

Thus, the age of Reform and the nineteenth century was a declining period as compared to the peaceful constructive work of the eighteenth century. The conception of the modern age in *Hungarian history* rests on the

analyzed. And certain detrimental effects of the Jewish influence (usury, economic exploitation, and reinforcement of the chauvinistic tendencies) were less racial problems than the sickness of a society in which the masses of the peasantry and of the working-classes led a life of slow starvation and mental decay under the pressure of an anachronistic and cruel class domination," Jászi (1929), 239. Cf. Miklós Szabó (1971, 1989, 2003) and Dénes (1976, 1999, 2001).

⁷ The historian Sándor Domanovszky wrote of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century volumes of *Hungarian history*: "What is striking is not that the sweeping overall concept does not allow all minute details to appear—this is a natural consequence—but that light only falls where the artist projects it. And that is only possible in a studio; the plein air shows reality differently. Nonetheless, it is not the job of history to shape nature as art but contrarily, to reconstruct the truth, despite all artistic viewpoints." Domanovszky (1930), 882.

⁸ Szekfű (1931, 1933).

dichotomy of sixteenth and seventeenth century (responsible, devoted) “great Hungarian” politics and the “small Hungarian” political road (ranging from rebellious collaboration with the Ottoman Porte and self-interest to a useful anti-absolutism). In the nineteenth century, the “great Hungarian” attitude meant Széchenyi, the centralists, and the advocates of the Compromise, while the “small Hungarian” conception alluded to Kossuth and his followers. The standard of measure was increasingly represented by the centralists, in Szekfű’s view. The author of *Three generations* and *Hungarian history* claimed that the conservatives and the liberals were not separated by the contents of their programs but by their tone, phrasing, and language.⁹

Metamorphoses Narrationis (1942, 1947)

Gyula Szekfű selected some of his articles published between 1929 and 1942 for his volume *State and Nation*, and added a new study about the nationality issue. What was common in these writings was their author’s interpretive attempt to explain the relationship between the historical Hungarian state and its nationalities in the Middle Ages and in the modern age in order to lay the foundations of a nationality policy for the multinational Hungarian state expected to be restored.¹⁰

He argued that St. Stephen’s state bequeathed to us a legacy. Notably, the Hungarian state did not consist of a single language or single ethnicity. In the historical Hungarian state there was a mixed population, and thus the patterns of the unilingual nation-state, proclaimed by the French revolution or the German ethnic principle based on blood relation, could not be adopted. Instead, historical Hungary had to be restored with the help of the political sensitivity of the Hungarian statesmen, and within it the Hungarians and non-Hungarians should join forces in a confederate cooperation. The ideal should be the improvement of historical Hungary instead of phantasmagorias of an idyllic state (actually Balkan conditions), because there was no nation without statehood.¹¹

He claimed that contrary to the image of Hungary abroad, what the history of the minorities of Hungary reveals is not oppression but the un-

⁹ Szekfű (1922), 195–198, (1933), 153, 162–166. Cf. Ballagi (1897), 693–707, István Deák (1979), 54–56, Schlett (1999), 266–302, Takáts (2007), 49–51, and Gyurgyák (2007), 51–54.

¹⁰ Szekfű (1942), 5–6, 54–68, 197–211, 255–264, 366–372.

¹¹ Szekfű (1942), 9–84, 283–296, 366–372.

precedented decline and perishing of the formerly hegemonic nationality, the Hungarians. Last century's Hungarian ruling stratum was exhausted (or by a mixture of blood, the ancient traits became diluted or degenerated) and could not be refreshed from middle-class and peasant strata. The peasants were unable to become the vehicle of the nation's political sensitivity since they had an inferior or entirely lacking political education. The precondition for the self-awareness of the lower social strata was the progress of their way of living, that is, they had to realize the historical, state maintaining role of the leading strata, and supersede the mentality wholly determined by immediate interests.¹² The medieval politicians of the Hungarian state had no inferiority complex towards anyone, as it was never questioned that the state was of the Hungarians, and the incoming non-Hungarians could not rely on their relatives living adjacently to the Hungarian state.¹³ It was the Ottoman rule of Hungary that turned it into a multinational country in which non-Hungarians outnumbered Hungarians, because in the anti-Ottoman wars settlements of the all-Hungarian population perished in huge areas and masses of non-Hungarians came in their wake, their number thus rising in excess of the Hungarians during the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. The French model of the unilingual nation-state and Joseph II's Germanization language act triggered off the nationality struggles. The Hungarians vied with Vienna for the right to use the Hungarian language and for independent Hungarian statehood, achieved first in the 1840s and then with the dualist compromise of 1867. The Hungarian nationalities act of 1867 guaranteed the nationalities' rights as citizens and discarded the identification of the linguistic and political borders, while it did not prevent their organization for self-expression. The leaders of the nationalities, however, learned the French lesson of the unilingual nation-state from Vienna and managed to organize their movements within the political frames of the Hungarian state, but with support from the neighboring parent states. Lacking subtle political sensitivity, the masses of the nationalities were exposed to their leaders and the politics of the neighboring states supporting them and they became radicalized upon the decisive influence of these factors. Except for the Germans of Hungary, all nationalities expressed solidarity with their brethren beyond the borders. The Hungarian policy makers were, however, merely passive observers of the efforts aimed at separating the nationalities.¹⁴

¹² Szekfü (1942), 181–254.

¹³ Szekfü (1942), 85–109.

¹⁴ Szekfü (1942), 109–177.

The volume laid the historical foundations for the restoration of historical Hungary and the rule of the historical ruling stratum, and this effort was rewarded by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences with the grand prize. At that time, Gyula Szekfű had already been planning to flee from the threat of Hitlerism and the extreme right (presumably also to save his wife of Jewish origin) and go to Great Britain via Istanbul where he would work at Oxford University through the good offices of C. A. Macartney. Had his plan been successful, he probably would have used his influence in the interest of restoring the Danubian Monarchy as an eminent expert of the Habsburg Empire, Central Europe, and the nationality issue. However, he failed to realize this plan.¹⁵ Gyula Szekfű remained in Hungary, somewhere in the countryside during the German occupation, and in illegality when the Hungarian Nazis came to power. When he returned home, in a private conversation he qualified the Soviet occupation as a new conquest.¹⁶ Publicly, however, he lashed out against the old system and its collapse in a great speech. This was hailed by one of the communist party leaders in an editorial.¹⁷ In Paris, Gyula Szekfű was present during the preparations for the peace conference in autumn 1946, and at its signing ceremony in February 1947 as ambassador to Moscow.

Szekfű himself passed judgement on the federalism of a multinational Hungary contrasted with linguistic and ethnic nationalism, even five years after his formerly declared position of 1942. When, however, he formulated this judgement, it was not a showdown with himself, but the lecturing of others, calling on his former readership to accept the “new realities”:

The tender shoots ... of our good renown were crushed by Hungary's Hitlerian politics. First by accepting from Hitler a part of the territories torn off at Trianon ... Hitlerian violence brought to our hands what we could have hoped to get back in time in a peaceful, formal, and acceptable manner ... Of course, with general Hungarian opinion being as it was, it was almost impossible to reject the “present.” The propaganda of the earlier twenty years which had been slowly learning things and improving in its outward manifestations, preserved its fundamental mistake inwardly: it was still feeding the Hungarian public with the hopes of a Greater Hungary in which there were no nationalities, where all was Hungarian, all was ours, and which we governed for a thousand years legitimately. Just as the taking over of Kassa and Kolozsvár was a Hungarian feast, Romanians or Slovaks hardly being mentioned even as extras ... we gave the people, the nationalities that were reannexed to us, the cold shoulder. That was the

¹⁵ Szegedy-Maszák (1996), 2:227–230.

¹⁶ Zoltán Szabó (1956), 19–20.

¹⁷ Révai (1911–1935).

first mistake, aggravated with the arrangement of the public administration and governance of the retaken areas ... depriving the nationalities, and the Hungarians living with them, of their right to vote, that is, we behaved more incorrectly than did the Czechs and Romanians for the previous twenty years. And more foolishly ... For twenty years we grumbled over the meagerness of democracy in the successor states, and then we sent the overt enemies of democracy there. And we transplanted the curtailment of human rights to the new areas, began discriminating against the Jewry, and rewarded ourselves with properties confiscated there. God put us to a test when we got back part of the areas with mixed nationalities. We were offered the possibility to perfectly realize at last what we had objected to and missed in our revisionist policy for the previous twenty-five years or so and to set an example to the world in handling the nationalities so that they might win all their rightful privileges and feel satisfied. We failed the test disgracefully, doing the polar opposite of what we ought to have done. By way of an excuse, one may argue that not the whole Hungarian nation committed that failure, only the government and the ruling class, without the majority of the Hungarian people even knowing of the erroneous regulations enacted in public administration. That is true, and it was indeed a disaster beyond our influence to be put to the test when the country ... was represented by a stratum of low intelligence and morality ... That is all true. Yet ... we all failed at the test, not only the governments who acted for us, on behalf of us ... It turned out that we just kept speaking and promising, and when it came to action we were not an inch better. We proved at the decisive moment that we could not, and did not want to, administer justice to the non-Hungarians, disavowing a centuries-old Hungarian practice that sustained the peaceful coexistence of Hungarians and non-Hungarians until the early nineteenth century. In my studies devoted to the history of the nationalities I called it St. Stephen's teaching, for it was King Stephen who bequeathed it to his heirs in writing that the non-Hungarians living in the country had to receive fair treatment. Acting upon his idea sensibly, we had to give the non-Hungarian nationalities the degree of independence and self-rule that the state of their self-consciousness and culture entitled them to in any given period. Thus, with the passing of the centuries, they had the right to more and more autonomy.¹⁸

Here, the western type democracy, liberal democracy, was not a realistic option. Anyway, it was only an ideal, since the realized forms of western democracy were abhorrent and corrupt. Hungary had no justification to criticize the Soviet conditions since its political relations were based overwhelmingly on the exclusion of the majority, on bribery, narrow partyism, and individual interests. Since the dualist period and the 1920s the Hungarian political conditions and the politically interested intellectuals had been sinking, and from the 1930s unprecedented degeneration had been manifest. In the Soviet Union, by contrast, the leading stratum and the intellectuals lived better than the rest, and the state tolerated religion increasingly more, a hope for the Hungarian middle class and intellectu-

¹⁸ Szekfű (1947), 66–70.

als. Perseverance and adaptation, these alone enabled the Hungarian nation to survive, which was also conditional upon the consummation of national culture in addition to the acceptance of the realities.¹⁹

Szekfű formulated this critique of revisionism and the policy of adaptation as ambassador to Moscow. He declared it to be out of the question that Hungary would be capable of democratic development on its own. His earlier views on the immaturity of the lower classes did not change; his target audience was the former ruling class whose political sense he wished to influence, giving them advice on how to weather out the new period of occupation, toward which the only possible attitude was accommodation, thereby redeeming the survival of the Hungarian nation (and first of all themselves).

The Constant Core (1913–1955)

Gyula Szekfű had serious reservations concerning the projection of national independence into the past, faith in progress, the democratic political establishment, and the optimistic interpretation of human nature. By contrast, he ascribed decisive importance to any given constellation of great powers, prized foreign political success highly, and had particular respect for the state, its institutions, and traditions. In his view, the conception of history, historical consciousness, national tradition, and the political system were factors that shaped history. He moved from a narrowed variant of the discourse of “adoption of European models” (identifying Europeanness with the Habsburg Empire) towards the discourse of “national self-centeredness,” but in the meantime he split up Europe into a moralizing interpretation of good and bad types (German–French, romanticism–liberalism, Habsburg–Ottoman, West–Balkan, reality–illusion), doing the same with Hungary (great Hungarian–small Hungarian courses). This attitude provided him with the position of the judge and extra-territoriality in most diverse situations. As a result, he was in the position to enunciate moral lectures to his readers, the members of the “Christian middle class” ready to realistically assess their situation. His concept of nation was determined by the paternalist state reckoning with and adapting to the great powers, taking care of underage society, and ensuring the conditions of national culture, and his program of identity was determined by loyalty to the *paternalist state*. He expressed this by delineating the

¹⁹ Szekfű (1947), 5–9, 93–103, 138, 143, 161–207.

detours from time to time that were to be avoided and the persons who represented these undesired directions. The wrong tracks were tantamount to an enemy image; the desirable road was identical with self-image.

The basic scheme of the narrative is the opposition of “the great Hungarian path” vs. “the small Hungarian path.” In Szekfű’s interpretation, the great Hungarian path was a conception the followers of which would rise above the *kuruc* and *labanc*, eastern and western, and anti-Habsburg and pro-Habsburg opposition, for the essence of the conception was the restoration of the integrity of the Hungarian state. However, in concrete contexts, the great Hungarian path turned out to be a desirable conception and behavior toward the preservation of the integrity of the Hungarian state, besides being antithetical to the small Hungarian path. Thus, the great Hungarian path was not a pole or an antithesis, but the exclusion and negation of the small Hungarian path, and the supersession of the antithesis. Oddly enough, overcoming antagonism meant the negation of one of the antithetical poles. The small Hungarian way in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries meant the anti-Habsburg grievances and sentiments of the *kuruc*. In the nineteenth century it denoted the gravaminalist aspect of the Hungarian liberalism, while in the twentieth it was the recalcitrance of Turanism, pulling the country down among the Balkan states. The common connotation in all these is popular and irresponsible demagoguery, emotional politics, and the unleashing of passions at any point of time, which precludes responsible policy making and destroys its achievements. The small Hungarian path was identical with the enemy; the great Hungarian path was the self-image also embodying the desirable political road. This pair of opposites is a scheme of good and evil petrified in timelessness, projected back into the past. By this scheme, evil was represented by the barbaric and emotional East, and good by the Habsburgs and the civilized, rational West, identified with the Hungarian aristocrats, who undertook the burden and responsibility of the compromise with the Habsburgs.

The enemy image designated Gyula Szekfű’s personal opponents and enemies, their archetypes in the past, on the one hand, and the type of behavior and situation that jeopardized the existence of the nation, on the other. The self-image designated the scholarly historian and his politician predecessors. Implicit, it also signified the archetypes and implications of the philosopher king, the devoted politician, and his influential adviser, the wise and responsible *Realpolitiker*. It indicated the correct behavior and political course, the targets of loyalty, and the *reality*.

The Ethnicist Re-Reading of the Master Narrative (1939)

The conservative master narrative of changing elements and a constant layout—based on Gyula Szekfű's deeply influential, and still very popular work—is a paternalist history of decline of the Hungarian state. It carried along ethno-protectionist elements, so it could and can be approached and reinterpreted along this dimension. “Character discourse,” the “great Hungarian path” and “small Hungarian path” outlined by the historian were transformed by a highly talented, prolific, and ambitious writer, László Németh, into the “profound Hungarian,” “shallow Hungarian,” and “newcomer Hungarian” typology in a conservative culture critical scheme.²⁰ He reinterpreted Szekfű's narrative in his pamphlet entitled *In minority*. Németh wished to explore who provided the linguistic, cultural, and moral patterns of Hungarian literature and through it the entire intellectual life since the early nineteenth century neological movement of language innovation, which in his interpretation was an uncritical and forced imposition of foreign patterns upon Hungarian culture. Were they producers of genuine value, being embedded in the surrounding world, growing out of it organically? Or were they producers of intellectual goods instead of values, not being attached to any community, and did their success only spread shallow, characterless, and superficial entertainment everywhere? Since the latter, the shallow Hungarians, became the exemplars, while the profound Hungarians were pushed to the peripheries, the newcomer Hungarians could fill the resultant vacuum. It would have been impossible for the newcomers to fit into the realm of values of the national tradition even if they wanted to, let alone replace it. They simply abided by the possibilities that the counter selection of shallow Hungarians had given rise to, which had taken place in the intellectual elite before their arrival. The counter selection of the intellectual life also resulted in the selection of the most unfit in politics by the 1860s. The valuable were squeezed out, the inferior triumphed, and the newcomers capitalized on the possibilities. The exemplars of literary, intellectual, and moral examples provided wrong patterns, which imbued and degenerated the whole spectrum of collective life in the long run. The task was to stop counter selection, disseminate the valuable patterns, and regenerate the collective evaluation.

László Németh's “pan-literary” interpretation was built on the community vs. society and obligation vs. consumption antitheses. He theorized even further Gyula Szekfű's scheme of decline along the dimension

²⁰ Szekfű (1913, 1916, 1920, 1922, 1931, 1933, 1947, 1955) and Németh (1989), 408–482.

of the moral deterioration of the national community. Instead of the *la-banc* and *kuruc* concepts of state integrity, he pitted the valuable creators of the intellectual life against the successful providers of valueless patterns. His argumentation also implied, without making it explicit, that the valuable is consequently unpopular (unsuccessful) and the popular (successful) is valueless. But many examples show that the profound Hungarians are not identical with the great Hungarians, and the shallow Hungarians are not the same as the small Hungarians. Nor is the equation true when the profound Hungarians are identified with the small Hungarians and the shallow Hungarians with the great Hungarians. The description of the counter selection of the intellectual life was hopelessly intertwined with the disputes on assimilation. László Németh identified with the profound Hungarian model, and at the same time it was his program for national regeneration, as was the great Hungarian path for Szekfü.

László Németh drew on two main sources. One was the core structure of Szekfü's historical narrative. The other was the scheme of elite counter-selection created by the writer/prophet Dezső Szabó. Szabó claimed that two worlds were confronted in Hungary: that of the archaic, self-contained peasantry and that of the modern upper strata with an eye to foreign models. This schism was caused by the foreign domination of the country, by the Habsburg rule. Lacking national affiliation with the Hungarians, the foreign dynasty recruited the governors, a new aristocracy, and a middle class from above and outside the country to offset the Hungarian nobility's constitutional efforts. As a result, strangers adopting and applying foreign models colonized the Hungarians at their mercy under the foreign suppression. This took place in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and after the crushing of the nineteenth century fight for freedom, and it was finalized by the Compromise, which completed the process by tying the Hungarians to the destiny of the outdated state formation of the Habsburgs doomed to demise. It was then that the emerging industry and trade, and then expanding capitalism became the monopoly of the Jews, the state and the army became the monopoly of the Germans, and the Hungarian intellectual life became the monopoly of both. The dualist Hungarian state did not protect the Hungarians from these monopolies, nor did it protect them against the separatist drives and movements of the nationalities. As the combined outcome of all this, Hungarians shed their blood for foreign interests; the revolution after World War I led to the reign of the Jews, the counterrevolution to the domination of the Germans, while masses of Hungarians came under the jurisdiction of foreign states and the consolidating counterrevolutionary system defrauded the libera-

tion of the peasants and brought along a new version of the Compromise. St. Stephen's Hungarian Empire (the program of restoring the multinational historical Hungary)—unlike what Szekfű opined—could not be the ideal of the future Hungarian democracy as it was a vain hope and an un-historical projection. For one thing, the defense of the minorities could not and did not constitute St. Stephen's policies as national awareness and sentiments simply did not exist in the age of the first Hungarian king. Secondly, the nationalities already had states of their own which they would not give up. The Habsburg restoration was even less desirable as it was a fatal state formation: "the disastrous year" of 1867 was the most ill-fated date in the one thousand years of Hungarian history.²¹ Dezső Szabó's historical narrative and role of the *kuruc* independence-centric thinking is rather evident. His narrative combined ethnocentrism, anti-Semitism, anti-German sentiments, national isolation, peasant mythology, and the self-awareness of the genius paired with the behavior of the "furious prophet" exposing sober argumentation and the making of consent.

Competing Visions of National History

The context of László Németh's historical narrative was the interwar discourse on national character, its ethnocultural language, and themes. The narrative was a history of the decline, a program for revival, and a normative self-definition.

In László Németh's view, it was not the adoption of liberalism or emotional politics but the adoption of foreign models (linguistic neologism) and the forcing of the true exemplars into the minority, which was the source of all evil. The genre and premise of Szekfű's *Three Generations* and Németh's *In Minority* were common: the catastrophic situation of the Hungarians was the outcome of internal causes. Though pursuing Szekfű's logic, László Németh's question was the same as Dezső Szabó's. He did not seek an answer to the question of the cause of Trianon and the dissection of Hungary, but what caused the "Jewish and German expansion" in the Hungarian intellectual and political life. Like the author of *Three Generations*, he started out by contrasting the inner requirements of the adoption of foreign patterns and self-contained Hungarian development, but he used Szekfű's construct to justify Dezső Szabó's *kuruc* interpretation, reproducing Szabó's "furious prophet" role.

²¹ Dezső Szabó (1937, 1940, 1990, 1991a, 1991b).

Szekfü's self-image was "great Hungarian" politics, the image of his enemy was "small Hungarian" politics. Dezső Szabó's image of the enemy comprised the Habsburg domination, the expansion of Jews, Germans, and Slavs, and his self-definition implied the role of the genius representing the oppressed, colonized Hungarian peasantry. László Németh combined this legacy of the "furious prophet" with the scheme of the decline as outlined in Szekfü's history, modifying the latter under the influence of the former. All three authors aimed to construct a new "national" middle class by state intervention; that was why their pamphlets and Dezső Szabó's publicistic writings suggested a type of dissimulation. All three branded and rejected the heritage of Hungarian liberal nationalism. None interpreted history on the basis of the equality of civil rights.

Szekfü's norm was the political sensitivity of the state constituting forces, the fact and ability of possessing the Hungarian state. Németh's ethnic and moral critique (titled *In minority*) of Szekfü's national historical metaphysics had a penetrating effect as it adopted the very same logic of Szekfü's *Three generations* (which was never recanted by Szekfü). That explains in the first place the languid, defensive, and resigned character of Szekfü's self-defense against László Németh.

László Németh chose a genre of writing in which the historical justification for the modification of the rate of middle-class growth was inseparable from the audacious protest against the contemporaneous menaces. An erroneously formulated question cannot elicit anything but an erroneous answer. His description of symptoms and interpretation of situations were thus connected to the role of the "furious prophet." László Németh gave further thoughts to Gyula Szekfü's conservative history interpretation, the "great Hungarian" standpoint and scheme of the decline, then reinterpreted and transformed it. The main source for this reinterpretation was Dezső Szabó's interpretive scheme of Hungarian peasantry vs. foreign ruling stratum, heavily burdened with the theme of "national self-centeredness" and the "romantic" narrative tied to Hungarian past; the enemy image of foreign rule and influence, peasant romanticism, and the castigating and exposing role of the revelatory prophet. Each of these burdens preclude objectivity and sober argumentation, let alone their combination. For László Németh, the cohering force of the nation was national culture conceived as a sort of secularized national religion. It did not simply imply the values he discovered in it and revealed, but also what he created by way of a program to set an example to those who could have solidarity with his views and calling. That was both the self-definition and collective program, fundamentally determined by the essentialist defini-

tion of the community, and the writer's prophetic role—the legacy of the “furious prophet,” the heaviest theme of Hungarian “national self-centeredness” implying exclusiveness and revelation. There is never argument with revelation; revelations can either be unconditionally accepted or wholly rejected. That was exactly why László Németh harshly criticized Dezső Szabó earlier. The writer's identity was determined by several factors: his demand for autonomy, his view of himself, his interpretation of culture in the function of a secularized religion, his essentialist concept of nation presuming a unified culture, and his utopian view of the intelligentsia. They jointly outlined the writer's self-identity, also influencing his role. His readership included the normative Hungarian intellectuals, his identification program aimed to create and serve the normative culture, a heroic task for the writer and his adherents in that time and an example for the future of a Europe hit by a value crisis.

A contemporary of the above thinkers, the Calvinist minister and art historian, Lajos Fülep, described “national self-centeredness” in the following words:

By way of instinctive defense ... the ideology of the movement calling itself nationalist oozes to the surface hesitantly after the revolution of '48 ... It is still afraid to openly denounce the revolution, the public mind is still too thoroughly imbued with the faith and fervor of the great national deed of the revolution to be able to successfully undertake the formulation of the principles of an isolation running counter to the trend of the revolution: it comes out into the open in disguise, under cover, and begins to shape and organize the public. The tenets of its logic are, however, easily discernible: the revolution is crushed—the failure was a disaster for the nation—the origin of the revolution is the adoption of western ideas, consequently, dangerous western ideas must be kept aloof from, it is the right of the nationalist movement to define what the Hungarian character is, what is beneficial, and what is prejudicial to the nation. In other words: however necessary it might have been, the revolution was now over, for good and in all fields, achieving what was desirable for the nation; now steps had to be taken so that never again would or could there be a revolution, we have now to live and prosper within the frames of the dualist compromise, the compromise having institutionalized all the achievements of the revolution.²²

The interpretation can refer to both the conservative master narrative and its ethno-protectionist reinterpretation. National self-centeredness, national self-interest, and autochthony are the political languages of the myth that claims that Hungarians have specific features which no other group of people but they possess. This, as we know however, is not a

²² Fülep (1934).

unique Hungarian, or Central and Eastern European concept. This kind of character discourse, which claims that national peculiarities and national character are values in themselves that have to be protected and asserted, is prevalent all over the world. It is decisive in Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe, it can be found in Northern Europe, in Western Europe, the United States, and it is widely spread in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. As long as the texts were not available in the major world languages, the elements of the nation-building ideological programs could be taken for national characteristics. Now it is going to be clear more and more that the mythologization of the national peculiarities was part of the nation-building ideological program from Estonia to Turkey and naturally from Great Britain through France to Germany and Italy, and these were all very much alike.²³ In the ethnocultural discourses of the twentieth and twenty-first century, these elements were transformed and rearranged in new contexts: the *cause of "belonging somewhere"* has become separated from the *cause of liberty*, and, what is more, has even turned against it.²⁴

²³ Trencsényi and Kopeček (2006–2007), Mishkova (2009), Trencsényi (2010).

²⁴ Bibó (1993).

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Index

- Almásy, Móric, Count, 186
Andrássy, György, Count, 185
Andrássy, József, Count, 45
Andrew, II, King, 74n31
Apponyi, Albert, Count, 6
Apponyi, György, Count, 5, 46, 79,
 93, 94, 110, 117, 121, 133–34n74,
 145, 146, 148, 156, 158, 160, 163,
 172, 174, 179, 184, 185
Asbóth, János, 31, 187, 193
Augusz, Antal, Baron, 184
- Bábolnai, Mihály *see* Kossuth, Lajos
Bach, Alexander von, Count, 183
Bajza, József, 148
Barkóczy, János, Count, 179, 185
Batthyány, Lajos, Count, 33, 42, 148,
 169, 176, 180, 188
Bentham, Jeremy, 27, 64
Beöthy, Ödön, 88, 91, 95, 103
Berg, Wolfgang, 66, 70
Bezerédy, István, 83, 88, 103
Bibó, István, 12
Bismarck, Otto von, 13
Bölöni Farkas, Sándor, 98
Bonald, Louis Gabriel Ambroise de,
 13, 34, 105, 106
Borsos, Márton, 45
- Braun, Róbert, 192n6
Bülau, Friedrich von, 97
Burke, Edmund, 76, 106
- Carlyle, Thomas, 14
Chevalier, Michel, 98
Constant, Benjamin, 27
Császár, Ferenc, 45
Csengery (Csengeri), Antal, 31, 188
Custine, Astolphe Louis Léonor,
 Marquis de, 73
Czindery, János, 46
Czindery, László, 145
- De La Motte, Károly, Count, 54
Deák, Ágnes, 183n12
Deák, Farkas, 31, 188
Deák, Ferenc, 6, 26–28, 33, 52, 55, 58,
 80, 81, 89, 111, 148, 155, 184,
 185, 190
Derby, Lord, 13
Dessewffy, Aurél, Count, 5, 29, 31–33,
 35, 38–61, 65–70, 81, 82, 92–94,
 105, 106, 110, 113, 114, 119, 123,
 133–34n74, 156, 157, 167, 187
Dessewffy, Aurél, Jr., 189
Dessewffy, Emil, Count, 5, 73, 80–82,
 90, 93–95, 110, 112–114, 121–

- 134, 137, 140, 141, 144, 148, 157,
158, 166–169, 179, 181, 183–185,
189, 190
- Dessewffy, József, Count, 32–35, 57
- Dessewffy, József Mrs. née Sztáray
Eleonóra, Countess, 33, 133–
34n74
- Dessewffy, Marcell, 133–34n74
- Dessewffy, Virginia, 133–34n74
- Disraeli, Benjamin, 13, 14, 155n30
- Domanovszky, Sándor, 193n7
- Engels, Friedrich, 100
- Eötvös, Ignác, Baron, 32
- Eötvös, József, Baron, 42, 53, 67, 72,
82, 90, 94, 101, 126, 148
- Erdődy, Sándor, Count, 170n28
- Ferdinand (Habsburg), I, 25
- Ferdinand (Habsburg), V, 79, 160,
161, 176, 179
- Francis Joseph (Habsburg), I., 179,
181, 190
- Fülep, Lajos, 204
- Gentz, Friedrich von, 33, 76, 106
- Hajnóczy, József, 19, 26, 154
- Hallam, Henry, 97
- Haller, Karl Ludwig von, 106
- Haller, Sándor, Count, 170n28
- Haynau, Julius Jacob von, Baron, 180
- Herder, Johann Gottfried, 70
- Hitler, Adolf, 196
- Horváth, Mihály, 46, 141
- Irinyi, József, 119, 120
- Jablanczy, Ignác, 45, 46, 49, 180
- Jarcke, Karl Ernst, 35, 41, 97
- Jászi, Oszkár, 6, 191, 192n6
- Jelačić, Josip, Baron, 117, 176
- Joseph (Habsburg), II, 18, 66, 160,
195
- Jósika, Samu, Baron, 5, 79, 93,
94, 117, 121, 147, 176, 179,
185
- Kádár, János, 6, 8
- Kállay, Ferenc (“Baricz”), 72, 94–105,
114, 121, 123, 127, 158
- Károlyi, Mihály, 191
- Keglevich, Gábor, Count, 137, 140
- Kemény, Zsigmond, Baron, 79, 192,
193
- Klauzál, Gábor, 88, 91, 103
- Kossuth, Lajos, 19, 28, 32, 41–43,
45–48, 50–53, 58, 63, 64, 65n9,
67, 68, 72, 73, 75, 79, 81, 82, 86,
88, 90, 94, 115, 124, 128, 135,
148, 155, 161, 170–71n28, 173,
177, 188, 192–94
- Kölcsey, Ferenc, 26–28, 85, 86, 88,
155
- Kübeck, Karl Friedrich, 40, 130
- Lamberg, Ferenc, Count, 180, 188
- Lavoisier, Antoine Laurent de, 86
- Leo, Heinrich, 97
- Limnaeus, Ioannes, 97
- Lipthay, Sándor, 5, 74n31, 75–78, 90,
94–96, 105–12, 114, 121, 123,
127, 137, 139, 140, 147, 158, 180,
183
- Lonovics, József, 46
- Lónyay, János, 175
- Lónyay, Menyhért, Count, 134, 175
- Louis, XVIII, 97
- Luka, Sándor, 45, 110

- Madách, Imre, 126–27n64
 Mailáth, György, 79, 83, 84, 103, 137, 168, 184, 186
 Maistre, Joseph de, 13
 Majláth, János, Count, 78
 Mannheim, Karl, 14
 Marczali, Henrik, 192n6
 Metternich-Winneburg, Clemens
 Lothar, 33, 35, 40, 41, 67, 79, 92, 109, 132, 172, 176, 181
 Móricz, Zsigmond, 192n6
 Möser, Justus, 13
 Müller, Adam, 75, 106

 Nagy, Károly, 50
 Németh, László, 200–04

 O’Connel, Daniel, 125

 Pajkossy, Gábor, 53n44, 170n28
 Palóczy, László, 103
 Pasquier, Etienne-Denis duc de, 97
 Péchy, Manó, Count, 186
 Peel, Robert, 5, 31
 Perczel, Mór, 103
 Petőfi, Sándor, 112, 176
 Podmaniczky, Frigyes, Baron, 170n28
 Priestley, Joseph, 27
 Pulszky, Ferenc, 31, 72, 188

 Ráday, Gedeon, Count, 83, 170n28
 Rassay, Károly, 6
 Raumer, Friedrich von, 98
 Raynouard, François Juste Marie, 97
 Réz, Mihály, 32, 188
 Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 105
 Rupert, Rezső, 6

 Savigny, Friedrich Karl von, 75, 106
 Schwab, Leo (Löw), 103

 Sennyey, Pál, Baron, 6, 167, 168, 180, 184–87
 Somssich, Pál, 79, 83, 84, 110, 137–40, 147, 182, 183, 186
 Stanley, Lord Edward Geoffrey Smith, Earl of Derby, 48
 Stephen (Habsburg), Archduke, 160, 176
 Stephen, St. I. (king), 194, 197, 202
 Szabó, Dezső, 201–04
 Szalay, László, 31, 135
 Szapáry, Antal, Count, 170n28
 Széchenyi, István, Count, 31, 33, 41–43, 63, 70–73, 103, 130, 143n9, 148, 161, 176, 187, 192–94
 Szécsen, Antal, Count, 5, 22, 67–71, 79, 90, 95, 102, 103, 105, 110, 112–21, 123, 127, 137, 139–44, 147, 158, 167, 177, 179, 184, 188
 Szécsen, Károly, Count, 188
 Szekfü, Gyula, 23, 32, 137, 188, 190, 191–94, 196, 198–203
 Szemere, Bertalan, 85
 Szentiványi, Vince, 46
 Szentkirályi, Móric, 91, 103
 Szögyény, László (Szögyény-Marich László), 179, 186
 Sztáray, Albert, Count 46, 61, 62, 64–67, 80–82, 94, 96, 99, 100, 105, 106, 110, 113, 114, 121, 123, 127, 133, 134, 157
 Sztáray, Eleonóra *see* Dessewffy, Józsefné, Countess
 Sztáray, Júlia, 133–34n74

 Teleki, Domokos, Count, 170n28
 Teleki, László, Count, 6, 169, 170n28
 Tisza, István, Count, 6, 188
 Tisza, Kálmán, 6
 Tocqueville, Alexis de, 73, 98

- Toldy, (Schedel) Ferenc, 46
Török, János, 188

Ürményi, József, 45

Varga, János, 50n37
Vay, Dániel, Count, 72, 164, 170,
170–71n28
Vay, Lajos, Baron, 170n28
Vay, Miklós, Baron, 137, 180, 184,
186
Vázsonyi, Vilmos, 6
Vida, Károly, 188
Voltaire, (Arouet) François-Marie,
105
Vörösmarty, Mihály, 31, 32
Vukovics, Sebő, 103

Wachsmuth, Wilhelm, 97
Waldstein, János, Count, 170n28
Welden, Franz Ludwig, 190
Wenckheim, Béla, Baron, 170n28
Wesselényi, Miklós, Baron, 19, 26,
28, 58, 72, 73, 154, 155
Windischgrätz, Alfred, 179, 180

Zarka, János, 45
Zay, Károly, Count, 170n28
Zelenski, Róbert, 190
Zichy, Ferenc, Count, 185, 186
Zichy, Jenő, Count, 55
Zichy, Ödön, Count, 56
Zsedényi, Ede, 55, 79, 80, 82–85, 88,
90–92, 94, 103, 118, 156, 157,
160, 173, 186

Illustrations



Miklós Wesselényi (1796–1850)
The leader of the liberal opposition in the 1830s.
Lithography by Miklós Barabás, 1838. MNM TKCS, 4487.



Lajos Kossuth (1802–1894)
Journalist, politician, leader of the liberal opposition in the late 1840s.
(photograph, Edinburgh, 1855) MTA KK, Ms 5057/130.



Aurél Dessewffy (1808–1842)

The founding father of the conservative group and party at the turn of the 1830s and 1840s.
Line-engraving by Ludwig Passini after Barabás, no date. MNM TKCS 72/1948. Gr.



GRÓF APPONYI GYÖRGY.

György Apponyi (1808–1899)

Lithography by József Marasztóni, 1862. MNM TKCS88/1951. Gr.



Samu Jósika (1805–1860)
Lithography by Miklós Barabás after János Szabó, 1840. MNM TKCS 5063



Liphay Sándor
a gyűlde elnöke.

Kiadás: szegedi, és baráti

Sándor Liphay (1793–1870)
Lithography by Miklós Barabás, 1846. MNM TKCS 2819.



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KÁLLAY FERENCZ.

Ferenc Kállay (1790–1861)
Vasárnapi Újság December 8, 1861. OSZK



Sándor Luka (1802–?)
Steel-engraving by Tyroler after Miklós Barabás, 1847. MNM TKCS 3001.



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Gábor Keglevich (1784–1854)
Lithography by Joseph Kriehuber, 1842. MNM TKCS 8140.



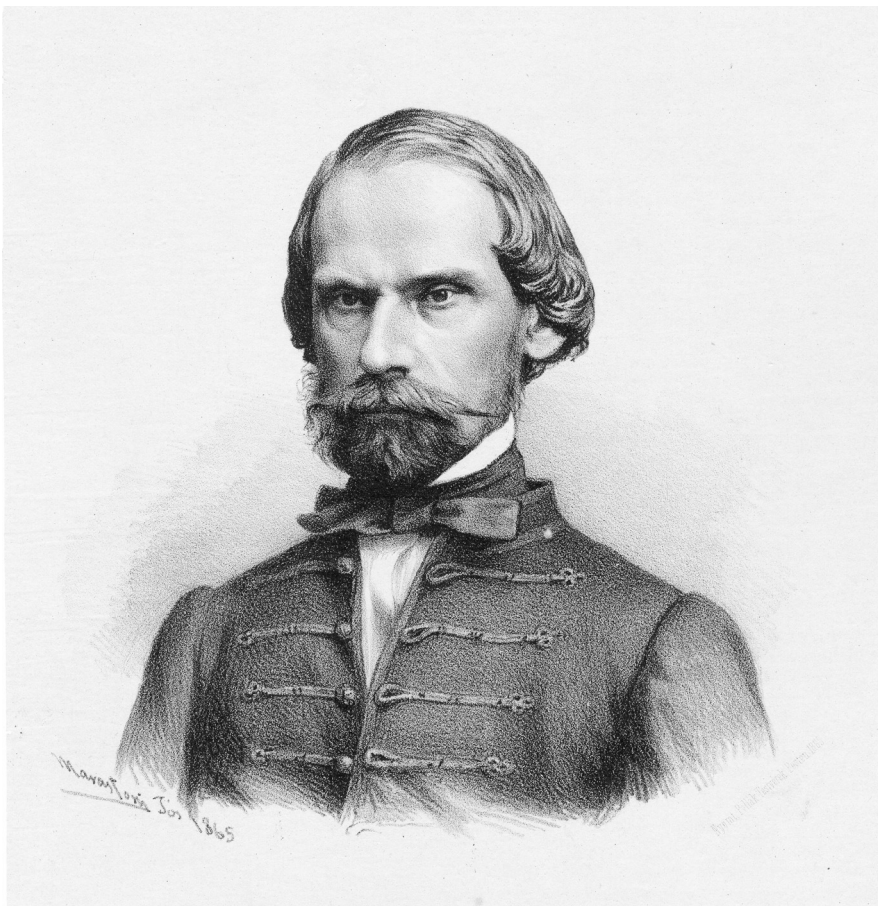
László Szőgyény (1806–1893)
Lithography by Franz Eybl, 1845. MNM TKCS 4051.



György Mailáth (1818–1883)
Lithography by Adolf Dauthage, 1860. MNM TKCS 8498.



Antal Babarczy (1813–1881)
Lithography by Franz Eybl, 1848. MNM TKCS 350.



Pál Sennyey (1824–1888)
Lithography by József Marasztóni, 1865. MNM TKCS 4087.



KIADTA VEREBY SOMA.

AZ UTÁNNYOMATTILÓS.

SOMSSICH PÁL

az országos képviselőház elnöke stb.

Pál Somssich (1811–1888)

Lithography by unknown author, no date. MNM TKCS 6192.



Miklós Vay (1802–1894)
Lithography by Josef Kriehuber, 1847. MNM TKCS 1953.



Ede Zsedényi (1804–1879)
Lithography by Franz Eybl, 1843. MNM TKCS 2179.



Világ Saturday, October 23, 1841.
OSZK. H. 3490.



Budapesti Híradó Friday, November 21, 1845.
OSZK. H. 4171.



Nemzeti Újság Tuesday, July 15, 1845.
OSZK. H. 4282.



Gyula Szekfű (1883–1955)
Béke és Szabadság June 29, 1955,
p.15. OSZK HC.1713.



László Németh (1901–1975)
(1969) Photo by Károly Forgács. MNM MTF, 82.46.

Abbreviations:

MNM TKCs:	© Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum, Történelmi Képcsarnok [Hungarian National Museum, Hungarian Historical Gallery]
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